

# ASSIGNMENT REDESIGN WORKSHOP

**Is your assignment not working? Need help?**

Get quick feedback on an assignment from colleagues across campus.

This workshop will stimulate ideas about how to strengthen the assignment you bring to the session and open up a productive “trading zone” for discussion about teaching and learning.

Sponsored by:

The Center for Faculty Development,  
Improving Disciplinary Writing (IDW), and  
The Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment

**REVISION, REVAMP, REDESIGN**

# ASSIGNMENT REDESIGN WORKSHOP

This faculty-led workshop will allow you to collaborate with your colleagues and think together about how assignments can be linked to important learning outcomes in ways that create more coherent pathways for students.



Faculty will leave this workshop with detailed feedback from their peers on assignment design. Faculty will also have the opportunity to contribute to the refinement of other assignments through the exchange of best practices.

## THE DETAILS

Your choice of dates:

Tuesday, January 30th 9:00am – 12:00pm

Wednesday, January 31st 1:00pm – 4:00pm

Education Building - Multipurpose Room 1106

Space is limited. Please register by January 24th.

**REGISTER HERE:** [www.eventbrite.com/e/assignment-workshop-tickets-41390090876](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/assignment-workshop-tickets-41390090876)

**REVISION, REVAMP, REDESIGN**

## Eventbrite Text

This three-hour workshop will be an exciting opportunity to collaborate and trade ideas with other faculty about the design and use of the various tasks, projects, papers, and performances we set for our students. Faculty will leave this workshop with detailed feedback from their peers on an assignment of their choice. Faculty will also have the opportunity to contribute to the refinement of other assignments through the exchange of best practices.

### **Purpose**

The workshop aims to

- 1) stimulate ideas about how to strengthen the assignment you bring to the session,
- 2) open up a productive “trading zone” for discussion about teaching and learning, and
- 3) think together about how assignments can be intentionally linked to important course, program, and institutional learning outcomes in ways that create more coherent pathways for students.

### Benefits of participating in the workshop

- A chance to refine an assignment you’re working on
- Get ideas you can take back to your classes
- Get interdisciplinary feedback from colleagues across campus
- Contribute to the work of others
- Be part of a larger development – contribute to NILOA’s Assignment Library Initiative

### Awesome (potential) outcomes of the workshop

- Spend less time answering questions from students
- Decrease the amount of time you spend grading and giving feedback on the assignment
- Increase the number of high quality assignments turned in each semester
- Help students make exciting connections in your class

## Consider attending in teams

- A group of faculty teaching the same course might attend the workshop with the goal of creating a clearer, stronger assignment that could be used/shared across sections.
- A faculty member teaching a lower level course in the major might attend with a faculty member who teaches the capstone; their focus would be on linking those assignments in some way.
- A group of faculty that want to improve written communication within their program; their focus would be on enhancing writing assignments throughout a number of courses in the curriculum.

Please register for the workshop by Wednesday, January 24th. Space is limited.

## FAQs

### **What do I need to bring to the workshop?**

Please bring 4 copies of your assignment materials and your reflective memo to the workshop. These will be given to your colleagues. OR Email a copy of these materials to [kkirland@odu.edu](mailto:kkirland@odu.edu) by Sunday, January 28th and we will print your materials and bring them to the workshop for you.

### **What assignment should I share?**

This might be a draft assignment you are working on and would like to share with colleagues, one that has worked well but may be in need of a “refresh,” or one that has not worked as you hoped.

### **What should be included in the reflective memo?**

1) The purpose of the assignment: What outcomes is it intended to foster and elicit?

2) The context in which it is used—in what course or courses, with what students, at what point in the curriculum?

3) Your experience of the assignment at this point? How have students responded? What do they do well? What do they find especially challenging?

4) Questions you have about the assignment: What kinds of feedback on the assignment are you hoping for from colleagues attending the charrette?

5) How do you assess student work in response to the assignment: please include a rubric or evaluation criteria.

**How can I contact the organizer with any questions?**

Feel free to contact Kelsey Kirland, Assistant Director of Assessment, with any questions at [kkirland@odu.edu](mailto:kkirland@odu.edu)

**Will there be food?**

Light refreshments will be served.

SUBJECT: Important details and Assignment Redesign Workshop Confirmation

Dear Workshop Attendees,

Thank you for registering for the interactive Assignment Redesign Workshop on Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup> from 9am to 12pm in the Multipurpose Room 1106 of the Education Building.

In preparation for the workshop, please select an assignment you would like to share. This might be a draft assignment you are working on and would like to share with colleagues during the session, one that has worked well but may be in need of a “refresh,” or one that has not worked as you hoped.

To facilitate informed and constructive discussion, we ask that you also prepare a reflective memo to accompany the assignment, indicating:

1. The purpose of the assignment: What outcomes is it intended to foster and elicit?
2. The context in which it is used—in what course or courses, with what students, at what point in the curriculum?
3. Your experience of the assignment at this point? How have students responded? What do they do well? What do they find especially challenging?
4. Questions you have about the assignment: What kinds of feedback on the assignment are you hoping for from colleagues attending the workshop?
5. How do you assess student work in response to the assignment? Please include a rubric or evaluation criteria.

Lastly, **please email a copy of these materials to [kkirland@odu.edu](mailto:kkirland@odu.edu) by Sunday, January 28th** and we will print your materials and bring them to the workshop for you. If you cannot meet this deadline, then we ask that you bring 5 copies of your assignment materials and your reflective memo to the workshop.

We look forward to seeing you next week. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

The Center for Faculty Development – Annette Finley-Croswhite and Joyce Armstrong

Improving Disciplinary Writing – Remica Bingham-Risher

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment – Tisha Paredes and Kelsey Kirland

# Assignment Redesign Workshop

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APPLYING A NATIONAL MODEL FOR ASSIGNMENT DESIGN AT ODU

National Institute for  
Learning Outcomes Assessment  
Making Learning Outcomes Usable & Transparent

# WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

# AGENDA

Context and Rationale

Charrette Discussions in groups of 4

Participant 1

Participant 2

Break

Participant 3

Participant 4

Group Reflection

# Why Assignments?

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# Why Assignments?

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Assignments bring high-level learning outcomes to life in actual student work.

They send powerful signals to students about what matters.

At their best, they both foster learning and document/assess it.

Creating a good assignment is challenging intellectual and creative work that should be visible, recognized, and rewarded.

Working together on assignments helps to develop shared language and more intentionally aligned and scaffolded sequences of assignments that guide students through their learning.

# What's in it for You?

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# NILOA's Initiative

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National Institute for Learning Outcome's Assessment

Funded to do national work with learning outcomes for associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees. NILOA noted rising interest in assignment design and use.

Invited faculty with draft assignments for a day of conversation and collaboration about their assignment, worked in 5-6 person, facilitated "charrettes"

# What's a Charrette?

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"Charrette" (Fr.) means a small cart. Because architecture students once deposited their assignments in it as the cart was rolled through the studio, architects now use the word to refer to **an intense creative effort in a limited time period.**



# The Charrette Discussion

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Make sure each person in your group has a copy of the assignment under discussion

Assignment author sets up the discussion, reviewing the focus and purpose of the assignment, and indicating what kinds of feedback would be most useful—5 minutes.

Discussion, Q&A—15 minutes

Written feedback on provided forms—5 minutes

Then move on to the next person

# Rules of Engagement

# Reflection

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What was this process like?

What ideas are you taking away?

What insights do you have about effective assignments?

What will you do next and what would help you do that?

How can others be brought into this work or benefit from it?

## REFLECTIVE MEMO

To facilitate informed and constructive discussion, we ask that you also prepare a reflective memo to accompany the assignment, indicating:

1. The purpose of the assignment: What outcomes is it intended to foster and elicit?
2. The context in which it is used—in what course or courses, with what students, at what point in the curriculum?
3. Your experience of the assignment at this point? How have students responded? What do they do well? What do they find especially challenging?
4. Questions you have about the assignment: What kinds of feedback on the assignment are you hoping for from colleagues attending the workshop?
5. How do you assess student work in response to the assignment? Please include a rubric or evaluation criteria.

# Participant Packet

## Assignment-Design Charrette Process:

In groups of 4, each person/team will have an opportunity to share their assignment and receive suggestions and feedback from the group. In order for everyone to have an opportunity to give and receive feedback, we will use a timed carousel process. There will be four rounds. You will be a “presenter” for one round and a “participant” for the other three rounds.

Each round is 25 minutes.

### **Introduce assignment (5 min):**

Presenters will introduce the assignment and provide background information such as: in what course the assignment is used, at what point in the course, pertinent information about the students in the course (majors vs. non-majors), what they find most challenging about the assignment, how it builds on earlier work and/or prepares students for more advanced work in later courses (or success beyond graduation), your experience with the assignment to date, how you hope to strengthen it, and what kinds of feedback and suggestions you would like from others.

*Listeners:* jot down thoughts and questions but please do not interrupt the presenter, let them have their full five minutes.

### **Discussion (15 min):**

Listeners will respond to what they have heard, taking turns asking questions, sharing thoughts, feedback, etc. The purpose of the discussion is to help your colleague strengthen their assignment so please be constructive and collegial. Also, please mind the time and allow each participant the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. Discussion should address the four questions on the feedback sheet.

*Presenters:* listen carefully and respond to the inquiries. Think about alignment, but also think creatively about possible solutions.

### **Feedback (5 min):**

Everyone: Based on the discussion, use the feedback form to give the presenter written feedback and suggestions. The presenter can use this time to write down notes about the assignment, based on what they just heard, along with outlining next steps for revision or additional feedback.

## **Assignment-Design Charrette Feedback Sheet:**

Assignment \_\_\_\_\_

Comments From \_\_\_\_\_

1. What outcomes do you think students will be able to demonstrate with this assignment?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What are the main strengths of this assignment for assessing the identified outcomes?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Thinking about the assignment from the point of view of students, what questions or suggestions do you have?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Other suggestions and possibilities – especially in response to the author’s questions about improving the assignment?

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3. Thinking about the assignment from the point of view of students, what questions or suggestions do you have?
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## Assignment Design: Questions for Reflection and Conversation

As part of our role in documenting campus experience with the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP), the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment has begun to assemble an “assignment library,” a collection of high-quality assignments designed and used by faculty to assess DQP proficiencies which serve as examples to incite faculty to craft their own assignments. Toward this end, we have convened groups of faculty and invited them to share their assignments with one another and work together to refine and improve them. The questions that follow are intended to capture the kinds of issues raised by these faculty members as they talked with one another. We put them forward here in the hopes that they will be useful to others—either as prompts for individual faculty reflection or as “conversation starters” for colleagues working together on their own campuses to improve their assignments.

The list is meant to be suggestive, not comprehensive; it is a work in progress that will be refined and expanded based on suggestions from individuals and groups engaged in work on assignments.

For other resources related to assignment design, see <http://www.assignmentlibrary.org/resources>

The Degree Qualifications Profile specifies five broad areas of proficiency: specialized knowledge; broad, integrative knowledge; civic and global learning; applied and collaborative learning; and intellectual skills. To learn more visit: <http://degreeprofile.org>

### Purpose and Alignment

What is the main purpose of the assignment?

How well does it provide a means for students to exhibit or demonstrate the proficiency you want them to have mastered?

How is the assignment related to course goals? Could that connection be made stronger or more explicit?



How is the assignment related to larger program goals (e.g. outcomes of the major, general education goals, or institution-level learning outcomes)? Could that connection be made stronger or more explicit?

Do students understand these connections? Would it be useful to help them do so? What would that look like?

### **Clarity and Communication**

Is the assignment and its purpose clear to students? (See assignment template, Ewell, 2013).

Does the assignment as written provide sufficient information for students to be able to generate a successful (and scorable) response?

How might students misunderstand the assignment or understand it differently than it is intended?

### **Value for Learning**

What do students learn—or what do you hope they will learn—in responding to the assignment?

Does the assignment push students to a next level of understanding or skill development? If not, could it do so?

Is there an opportunity to open up the assignment to other media and genres of performance? Rather than a traditional research paper intended for the instructor, might it, for instance, be a news article intended for a relevant community of readers? Could it be a group project? A PowerPoint presentation?

### **Scaffolding**

Does the course provide sufficient practice, information, and sequenced activities on the assignment's topic to allow students to be successful?

Does the assignment help to prepare students for subsequent related assignments, in this course and/or beyond?



What kinds of feedback on this assignment are most useful to students? How are opportunities for feedback and revision (or multiple drafts) built into the assignment?

### **Motivation and Engagement**

Is the assignment pitched at the right level of expectation given students' preparation and experience?

Is the assignment likely to motivate students to do their best work? Does it present an “intriguing problem” (Bean, 2011, p. 98)?

How might the assignment be made more engaging for students?

Is the assignment sufficiently challenging? Is it too hard?

### **Assessment Rubrics and Criteria**

What does a “good” student response to the assignment entail or look like?

Do you employ a rubric or explicit set of criteria for evaluating student work on the assignment? Are the criteria for assessing student performance on the assignment clearly aligned with the purpose and goals of the assignment?

Are the criteria for assessing student performance on the assignment sufficiently clear to students?

### **Ongoing Development and Improvement**

Are there aspects of the assignment that you'd like to reconsider or redesign?

What information would be helpful to you in redesigning and strengthening the assignment?

NILOA's Assignment Library was created in response to requests from faculty and campuses seeking examples, models, and templates for assessing DQP proficiencies. Assessment that relies on assignments given by faculty as part of students' regular coursework can help make assessment a more integral part of teaching and learning and therefore more useful for improvement. To access the Assignment Library (and submit a contribution), see [assignmentlibrary.org](http://assignmentlibrary.org)

# Assignment Design Charrette - Follow up survey

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Start of Block: Default Question Block

## Q1 Assignment Design Charrette - Follow up survey

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Q2 How likely are you to recommend this workshop to a colleague?

- Extremely likely (1)
  - Somewhat likely (2)
  - Neither likely nor unlikely (3)
  - Somewhat unlikely (4)
  - Extremely unlikely (5)
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Q3 What benefits do you believe you have gained as a result of the workshop?

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Q4 In what ways was the experience of the Assignment Design Charrette important for you professionally? (Please mark all that apply.)

- It helped me more clearly see my assignment through my students' eyes. (1)
  - I'm more aware of aligning my assignment(s) with desired institutional outcomes. (2)
  - I have begun looking at my other assignments more critically and carefully. (3)
  - It gave me a new way to think and talk about assessment. (4)
  - It prompted me to make changes in my teaching. (5)
  - It increased my understanding of how assessment can inform my teaching. (6)
  - I developed rubrics or other tools to assess learning outcomes. (7)
  - I intend to ask colleagues/others for feedback on other assignments. (8)
  - I better aligned my assignment with the evaluative criteria for it. (9)
  - Other (please specify) (10) \_\_\_\_\_
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Q5 After participation in the workshop, do you plan to do any of the following? (Please mark all that apply.)

- Use the assignment in a course. (1)
- Talk with students to help them understand the assignment more fully. (2)
- Revise the assignment to be more explicit about purpose. (3)
- Revise the assignment to be more explicit about the task. (4)
- Revise the assignment to be more explicit about the criteria for evaluation. (5)
- Share your assignment with colleagues on your campus. (6)
- Share other assignments with colleagues on your campus. (7)
- Participate in an event about assignment design on your campus. (8)
- Participate in an event about assignment design beyond your campus. (9)
- Help lead or facilitate an event about assignment design on your campus. (10)
- Help lead or facilitate an event about assignment design beyond your campus. (11)
- Make a presentation about assignment design. (12)
- Publish an article or essay about assignment design. (13)

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Q6 What additional educational resources or services about assignment design and use would be helpful to you or your colleagues?

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Q7 Would you like to continue to be involved in assignment design work if opportunities arise? (Please mark all that apply.)

- I could help to publicize the work by sharing links and assignment design resources with colleagues. (1)
- I could help to identify other faculty who might be interested in participating in future charrettes. (2)
- I could partner with administrative units to help facilitate assignment work on my campus. (3)
- I would be willing to lead workshops on assignment design. (4)
- Other (please specify (5) \_\_\_\_\_)
- Not at this time. (6)

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Q8 What specific suggestions do you have for future Assignment Design workshops?

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Q9 Were there any questions that we did not ask, that we should have?

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Q10 Thank you for participating in the Assignment Design Charrette.

End of Block: Default Question Block

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# Guidelines for Assignment-Design Charrette Facilitators

## Setting the Stage

Recognize that participants are likely to be nervous about sharing assignments, which have traditionally been fairly private work. It may be helpful to begin by acknowledging this outright, using the occasion to set a tone of constructive review and sharing (“we’re all in this together”), a focus on improvement, and an understanding that every assignment is a work in progress, which requires adjustments and modifications over time.

Empower faculty to contribute, share ideas, and discuss. IF the facilitator needs to jump in to fill a void or to get the conversation started that is okay. But we don’t want the facilitator to take over.

### Conversation/Discussion Probes

- Would you explain further? Tell me more. Can you give an example?
- What do others think? Have others had similar experiences/thoughts?
- Avoid “why?” questions –instead ask more direct questions about experiences.

### Assignment Starter Questions

- See the DQP document titled “Assignment Design: Questions for Reflection and Conversation”.

Help maintain the “rules of engagement” by modeling active listening. Promote turn taking, mutual respect, and a focus on being helpful rather than critical.

## Facilitation

Manage the time. NILOA’s charrette model allows 25 minutes per assignment, which includes a brief introductory context-setting by the assignment author, and 5 minutes for written feedback at the end, with discussion in between. The facilitator’s first and sometimes hardest job is to monitor the time and make sure that everyone in the group can contribute--and benefit.

Participants will be seeing these assignments for the first time at the workshop. Encourage presenters to follow their reflective memo to guide their assignment introduction time. Keeping the group on pace here will be key.

At the end of each round, ask everyone in the group to write feedback to the person whose assignment has been discussed. NILOA’s feedback form is very simple--just 4 open-ended questions.

## Preparation

Prepare for the session by reviewing these guides, familiarizing yourself with the charrette process and timeline, and review NILO’s list of questions for reflection and conversation.