Teaching with Writing (TWW) Tip

Clarify instructor expectations with annotated student writing samples

Rationale: Showing instructor-annotated samples of student writing helps learners understand how specific grading criteria will be applied to their own writing.

Step One: Gather student models to supplement assignment instructions and grading rubrics.

- Obtain students’ written permission to retain a copy of their completed drafts and/or final projects.
- Inform students that you will use the samples in future semesters, but not the current term.
- Protect students’ confidentiality and redact students’ name, date of submission, and any other personally-identifying information. Assure students that samples will be used only for instructional purposes.

Step Two: Analyze each sample to identify excerpts/passages that fail to meet, meet, or exceed your expectations (as expressed in grading criteria).

- Keep your assignment instructions and grading rubric/criteria handy as you analyze each sample.
  - A “Design Flaw Analysis” assignment in a 1000-level Design course, for instance, required students to describe a designed artifact, to identify and describe perceived flaw(s), and to propose a design solution.
  - The evaluation criteria for the assignment included organization/logic; clarity, creativity, and depth of analysis; and mechanics.
  - Each annotation should describe how the excerpt relates to instructor expectations (as stated in the assignment instructions and/or grading rubric).

- Annotate a sentence or excerpt to illustrate how/where it fails to meet grading criteria.
  - One paper analyzed the flaws in a prepaid calling card, and argued that: The flaw in this phone card lies in how they marketed it to be easy and able to use everywhere.
  - Use the annotated sample to engage learners in a conversation about expressing ideas in a logical manner.

- Annotate a sentence or excerpt to illustrate how/where the writing meets expectations.
  - One writer described the designed product: “The Hot Tools Ceramic Straightener is shaped like a pair of tongs; each tong is 9.25” in length and 3.5” in width.”
  - This sample could be used to invite discussion of the instructor’s expectations for descriptive writing.

- Annotate a sentence or excerpt to illustrate how/where the writing exceeds expectations.
  - One paper addressed the perceived flaws in the lid of a travel mug, and proposed a new lid design, which, as paper argued, “would provide consumers with greater satisfaction because the new design would prevent spillage and leakage.”
  - Use the annotated sample to spark an in-class discussion of the criterion addressing clear and creative design solutions.

Comment: Students benefit from seeing models of effective, less effective, and ineffective writing. Using samples of student writing helps learners understand what they should aim to produce (Carroll, 2002).
Resources:

- University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Campus Writing Program. (n.d.) *Writing matters #8: Teaching your field’s forms of writing*.


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](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.*