Planning Checklist: Research Assignments

It is important to collaborate with librarians, anticipate student stumbling blocks, and have a list of resources ready to guide students successfully through the research process. Use this checklist to assist in the planning process.

ASSIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS

General Assignment Considerations
___ Relate assignment to some aspect of course subject matter or learning objectives.
___ Increase understanding of both the subject and process for locating information with the structured assignment.

Encouraging Time Management
___ Scaffold assignment activities to build upon each other, culminating in the final project.
___ Provide a timeline to inform students how far along they should be by certain dates; set deadlines which allow students sufficient time for exploration, research, drafts and final production.

Type of Assignment
___ Experiment with short, less-complex essays or projects instead of a term paper (article summaries, scholarly paper analysis, annotated bibliographies, poster presentation, etc.) and specify the number of sources required.

Modeling and Grading
___ Provide models of exemplary research projects.
___ Provide grading rubric so instructor expectations are understood.

Involve a librarian in the design and research guidance phases

___ Confirm that published research exists to support the research assignment and recommended sources are available at the college library (online or in-person).
___ Require each student to research a different topic to ensure the library offers enough print resources.
___ Suggest sources that align with students' levels (reading ability, knowledge of subject matter, and search skills).
___ Avoid strict and burdensome limits (too many restrictions at once such as publication date, word counts, material type can make research nearly impossible for students).
___ Set reasonable expectations about the use of print sources versus online sources (sometimes, the most recent information is no longer available in print, e.g. many government publications are now only online).

RESEARCH GUIDANCE	Link to NVC Library: www.alamo.edu/nvc/library

Getting Started (General Knowledge / Research Process and Questions)

___ Define research assignment terminology so that it does not create ambiguity (e.g. handouts state that students cannot use the Internet yet students must locate articles in the library's online subscription databases).

Searching for Information

___ Direct where to find a variety of resources including digital (library databases, catalog, blogs, wikis, websites, etc.)

___ Recommend and require specific sources (subject library databases, reference materials, scholarly sources, etc.)

___ Reviews search strategies (Boolean operators, full-text, scholarly limiters, advanced searching, subject searching)

___ Permit students to change their topics based on the reality of their research experience.

Evaluating Information

___ Require appropriate authority, content, and timeliness (use evaluation checklists such as The CRAAP test).

Using Information

___ Inform students how to avoid plagiarism (e.g. Purdue's Online Writing Lab: Preventing Plagiarism)

___ Address note-taking, paraphrasing, summarizing, and ethical scholarship.

___ Provide citation guidance — NoodleTools, Citation Libguide

___ Give technical "how to" instructions for researching, using, creating and evaluating digital sources such as blogs, wikis, or streaming videos.

SUPPORT

___ Include links and contact information for Librarians (486-4513); Tech Support, and Tutoring services in addition to your own contact information.

___ Book an information literacy session with an NVC Librarian (486-4513)

___ Connect students to their college library: www.alamo.edu/nvc/library

___ Connect students to tutorials such as the Library Modules (http://www.alamo.edu/main.aspx?id=5948)

___ Demonstrate support services in class, such as Library Chat, Libguides, 5 ways to contact a librarian.

Adapted from Maricopa Community College Libraries' Planning Checklist: Research Assignments.