

Tips for creating effective research assignments

Step 1: Identify desired results and acceptable evidence of learning

- What should students know and be able to do with the information resources in your discipline in order to succeed in their field of study?
- What should students be able to do as a result of this assignment specifically?
- What are the most important or enduring concepts, ideas, or skills that students need to understand?
- How will you know if students have achieved the desired results and met the standards?
- What will you accept as evidence of student understanding and proficiency?

Step 2: Identify your expectations for source requirements and provide a clear rationale and context for those requirements.

- Define the qualities of acceptable sources. Recommend specific sources (databases, journals, reference books) that students might start with.
- Consider giving a required number of sources in a range so that students know when they have an adequate number of sources.
- Avoid a “recipe” for required sources such as 2 articles, 2 books, and 2 websites unless there is a clear reason for doing so and the rationale is given to students.
- Link resource requirements to the assignment’s stated learning objectives.
- Encourage students to get in touch with a librarian if they are having trouble finding information, and provide your liaison librarian’s contact information.

Step 3: Articulate the full set of student abilities required to effectively complete the assignment.

Students generally need to be able to do more than locate and cite scholarly articles by using the peer-reviewed checkbox limit in a psychology database and format a citation. Often they need to find an empirical study, read it to identify specific content (question, methods, findings), and describe why empirical evidence is valuable to the discipline.

Step 4: Outline the research process for students.

Acknowledge and explain that research is seldom a linear process and usually involves repeated searches and lots of reading. Many sources, once read, are discarded. It is very helpful to require students to submit some work in progress, which might be an annotated bibliography, a paper proposal, a literature review, a research journal, or another way for students to demonstrate that they are engaging in a research process far in advance of the final project’s due date.

University Libraries Services for USP Instructors

- **Consulting on research assignments and helping teach research in the classroom.** Robust information-based research assignments can help students engage more deeply in the research process.
- **Sharing sample lesson plans and descriptions of information-related learning outcomes.** Librarian-developed online guides assist faculty in teaching and assessing beginning through advanced information competencies.
- **Developing effective instructional sessions.** Communication between teaching faculty and librarian about timing, purpose, and learning outcomes allows students to get the most out of librarian-led instruction in COM courses.
- **Providing supplemental or alternative learning opportunities.** Librarians develop learning materials in a variety of formats for campus and online faculty to support teaching of information competencies (e.g., handouts, online guides, screencasts, worksheets, tutorials).

Subject Liaison Librarians

(as of April, 2014; please see <http://libguides.uwyo.edu/subjectliaisons> for updates. For more information about liaison services, see <http://libguides.uwyo.edu/libraryinstruction>.)

Coordinator of Liaison Program: Jamie Kearley (jkearley@uwyo.edu)

College of Agriculture:

- **David Kruger** (tseliot@uwyo.edu)

College of Arts & Sciences:

- **Kaijsa Calkins** (kcalkins@uwyo.edu): English, American Studies, American Indian Studies, African American & Diaspora, Communication & Journalism, Religious Studies
- **Tamsen Hert** (thert@uwyo.edu): History; Head of Special Collections
- **Jamie Kearley** (jkearley@uwyo.edu): Anthropology, Criminal Justice, Global & Area Studies, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology
- **Jennifer Mayer** (mayerj@uwyo.edu; on sabbatical until July 2014): Art, Music, Theatre & Dance, Gender & Women's Studies, Latina/o Studies, Modern/Classical Languages, Philosophy
- **Larry Schmidt** (lschmidt@uwyo.edu): Life Sciences, Botany, Chemistry, Geography, Geology/Geophysics, Mathematics, Physics/Astronomy, Statistics, Zoology/Physiology; Head of Brinkerhoff Geology Library

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