The TILT Approach: Transparency in Learning & Teaching

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Purpose  Give an overview of the Transparency in Teaching and Learning (TILT) framework

Tasks  Provide:
- a brief summary of major TILT research
- examples of TILTed assignments
- examples of other approaches to transparency

Criteria  You'll leave with:
- an understanding of the benefits of TILT
- an interest in learning more about TILT
- a desire to give TILT a try!
Many thanks to *TILT Higher Ed* and the *211 TILT: The Equitable Assignment Challenge* project for support and creative commons materials.
What is TILT?

- A model for making explicit the purpose, tasks, and success criteria for assignments
- An approach to teaching that helps students learn the unwritten rules for college success
- A philosophy of classroom transparency
Major Research

- **Two large scale studies**
  - First conducted nationally by the AAC&U
  - Second conducted at UNLV

- Both asked faculty to TILT 2 assignments from 1 course during 1 semester (2-1-1)
  - Before the assignment, faculty were to clearly communicate the **purpose, tasks, and criteria** of the assignment
  - An example assignment template was provided, but faculty could use any method or form of communicating the information
Major Research

- AAC&U results
  - TILT boosted students' learning in three ways that are predictors of course and college success
    - Academic confidence
    - Sense of belonging in college
    - Metacognitive awareness of skill development
  - Results were statistically significant with large effect sizes for all students
  - Gains were largest for traditionally underrepresented students, including first generation, low income, and BIPOC students
Major Research

• UNLV results
  o TILT increased student retention rates, for both one year and two year retention of new students
  o Results were statistically significant with large effect sizes for all students
  o Gains were largest for traditionally underrepresented students, including first generation, low income, and BIPOC students
A TILT Framework
(detailed templates available in session documents)

• Purpose
  o *Why* are the students doing this assignment?
  o Define the learning objectives of the assignment in language students will understand
  o What skills will students practice?
  o What knowledge will students gain?
  o How is this assignment relevant to students' lives?
A TILT Framework
(detailed templates available in session documents)

• Tasks

  o *How* will the students do this assignment?

  o Define what activities the student should do/perform

  o List any steps or guidelines, or a recommended sequence for the students’ efforts

  o Specify any extraneous mistakes to be avoided
A TILT Framework
(detailed templates available in session documents)

• Criteria for Success

  o How will the students be graded/evaluated?

  o Define the characteristics of the finished product

  o Provide a rubric or checklist for students to self-evaluate

  o Provide examples of what excellence looks like
Example Assignments

Algebra assignment, before and after TILTing

TILTed algebra assignment #1

TILTed algebra assignment #2
Additional Approaches to Transparency

Writing Mathematics Well

Discussion Board Criteria
Summary

- TILT focuses on making the *how* and *why* of assignments clear to students by communicating the **purpose**, **tasks**, and **criteria for success**

- TILT is a simple and small-scale practice with big impacts on student success

- TILT's impacts are greatest on traditionally underserved students, so it can help close equity gaps
Questions?

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Transparent Assignment Template

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This template can be used as a guide for developing, explaining, and discussing class activities and out-of-class assignments. Making these aspects of each course activity or assignment explicitly clear to students has demonstrably enhanced students’ learning in a national study.¹

Assignment Name
Due date:

Purpose: Define the learning objectives, in language and terms that help students recognize how this assignment will benefit their learning. Indicate how these are connected with institutional learning outcomes, and how the specific knowledge and skills involved in this assignment will be important in students’ lives beyond the contexts of this assignment, this course, and this college.

Skills: The purpose of this assignment is to help you practice the following skills that are essential to your success in this course / in school / in this field / in professional life beyond school:

Terms from Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives may help you explain these skills in language students will understand. Listed from cognitively simple to most complex, these skills are:
- understanding basic disciplinary knowledge and methods/tools
- applying basic disciplinary knowledge/tools to problem-solving in a similar but unfamiliar context
- analyzing
- synthesizing
- judging/evaluating and selecting best solutions
- creating/inventing a new interpretation, product, theory

Knowledge: This assignment will also help you to become familiar with the following important content knowledge in this discipline:
- ...
- ...

Task: Define what activities the student should do/perform. “Action verbs” from this chart might be helpful:

https://tilthighered.com/assets/pdf_files/revised_blooms_taxonomy_action_verbs.pdf. List any steps or guidelines, or a recommended sequence for the students’ efforts. Specify any extraneous mistakes to be avoided. If there are sound pedagogical reasons for withholding information about how to do the assignment, protect students’ confidence and sense of belonging in college with a purpose statement something like this: “The purpose of this assignment is for you to struggle and feel confused while you invent and test your own approach for addressing the problem....”

Criteria for Success:

Define the characteristics of the finished product. Provide multiple examples of what these characteristics look like in real-world practice, to encourage students’ creativity and reduce their incentive to copy any one example too closely. Engage students in analyzing multiple examples of real-world work before the students begin their own work on the assignment. Discuss how excellent work differs from adequate work. This enables students to evaluate the quality of their own efforts while they are working, and to judge the success of their completed work. It is often useful to provide or compile with students a checklist of characteristics of successful work. Students can also use the checklist to provide feedback on peers’ coursework. Indicate whether this task/product will be graded and/or how it factors into the student’s overall grade for the course. Later, asking students to reflect and comment on their completed, graded work allows them to focus on changes to their learning strategies that might improve their future work.

The author developed an earlier version of this template at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

¹ Winkelmes, Mary-Ann. “Transparency in Teaching: Faculty Share Data and Improve Students’ Learning.” Liberal Education 99,2 (Spring 2013);
TRANSPARENT ASSIGNMENT TEMPLATE

This template can be used as a guide for developing, explaining, and discussing class activities and out-of-class assignments. Making these aspects of each course activity or assignment explicitly clear to students has demonstrably enhanced students' learning in a national study.

Assignment Name

Due Date

Purpose
Define the learning objectives, in language and terms that help students recognize how this assignment will benefit their learning. Ideally, indicate how these are connected with institutional learning outcomes, and how the specific knowledge and skills involved in this assignment will be important in students' lives beyond the contexts of this assignment, this course, and this college.

Skills
The purpose of this assignment is to help you practice the following skills that are essential to your success in this course/in school/in this field/in professional life beyond school. Terms from Bloom's Revised Taxonomy of Educational Objectives may help you explain these skills in language students will understand. Listed from cognitively simple to most complex, these skills are

- **Remember**: Recognizing, Recalling
- **Understand**: Interpreting, Exemplifying, Classifying, Summarizing, Inferring, Comparing, Explaining
- **Apply**: Executing, Implementing, Analyze, Differentiating, Organizing, Attributing
- **Evaluate**: Checking, Critiquing
- **Create**: Generating, Planning, Producing

Knowledge
This assignment will also help you to become familiar with the following important content knowledge in this discipline:

1. X
2. X
Task

1. Define what activities the student should do/perform.
2. List any steps or guidelines, or a recommended sequence for the students’ efforts.
3. Specify any extraneous mistakes to be avoided.

Note: “Bloom’s Critical Thinking Cues Question” might be helpful.

Criteria for Success

- Define the characteristics of the finished product.
- Provide multiple, annotated examples of what these characteristics look like in practice, to encourage students’ creativity and reduce their incentive to copy any one example too closely.
- With students, collaboratively analyze examples of work before the students begin working. Explain how excellent work differs from adequate work.
- It is often useful to provide or compile with students a checklist of characteristics of successful work. This enables students to evaluate the effectiveness of their own efforts while they are working, and to judge the quality of their completed work. Students can also use the checklist to provide feedback on peers’ coursework. Indicate whether this task/product will be graded and/or how it factors into the student’s overall grade for the course.
- Later, asking students to reflect and comment on their completed, graded work allows them to focus on changes to their learning strategies that might improve their future work.