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

Provide your college library or the MCCCD Libraries link: [http://libguides.maricopa.edu](http://libguides.maricopa.edu)

**Getting Started (General Knowledge / Research Process and Questions)**
___ Understand the Research Process (e.g. Kulthau’s Information Search Process; ACRL Information Literacy Standards)
___ 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.)
___ Review 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—Citation Help: Maricopa Community College Libraries
___ 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 Librarian(s), Tech Support, and Tutoring services in addition to your own contact information.
___ Invite your college librarian to class (shows students that even you are asking the librarian for assistance).
___ Connect students to their college library: My Library: Maricopa Community College Libraries.
___ Connect students to tutorials such as Research Tips: Maricopa Community College Libraries.
___ Demonstrate support services in class, such as Ask a Librarian 24/7 Chat.