

Tips for Creating Assignments that Encourage Students to Apply their own Effort toward their Learning



Align Assignments with Course Goals

To reduce the feeling that assignments are busy-work and not to be taken seriously, be sure each activity you ask students to engage with moves course goals forward and explain to students the purpose of the activity.

Multimedia Assignments

Create assignments that have students submit responses via video or audio. Having students work beyond text will make the assignment more resistant to the predominant text-based generative AI tools. **VoiceThread** is perfect for this kind of assignment.

Time-Staggered Submissions

For larger projects, ask for periodic submissions of parts of the work. Regular check-ins will not only ensure the work is done by the student, but also provide opportunities for guidance and feedback.

Process Documentation

Require students to document their thought process, including false starts and mistakes, making it harder to use AI-generated content.

Capstone Projects

Require a final project that ties together all the concepts learned in the course. The complexity and personal engagement required for a capstone project can't be easily outsourced to AI.

Provide Opportunities for Student Choice

Is there more than one mechanism for a student to demonstrate their learning? Is it possible for the student to design an assessment that most aligns with their goals, interests and big questions? Encouraging students to feel ownership over the work they're doing will increase engagement.

Student-Created Content

Have students create and share content relevant to the course, like a blog post, video, or podcast. AI will struggle to create such content without obvious signs of non-human creation.

Group Work

While not everyone enjoys group work, it can be a useful way to encourage collaboration and engagement. Having students work in pairs or small groups on a shared project can deter the use of AI, as each group member can help hold the others accountable.

Peer-review Components

Include structured peer feedback, which adds accountability and encourages deeper engagement with the material.

Individualized Assignments

Provide assignments that are unique to each student, which can be based on personal information they provide at the beginning of the course. The personalization makes it difficult (though not impossible) for AI to generate responses.

Reflective Journals

Require students to keep a reflective journal throughout the course where they document their learning journey, challenges, and successes. The personal and introspective nature of these assignments makes it hard for an AI to replicate.

Real-world Applications and Case Studies

Have students apply concepts to current events or real industry challenges. This requires original analysis and critical thinking that AI would struggle to replicate.

Cross-disciplinary Projects

Integrate concepts from multiple subjects, requiring unique synthesis of knowledge that would be difficult for AI to generate convincingly.