

# Hamilton

## Designing Writing Assignments Inclusive of Multilingual Students

### Make Space for Multiple Perspectives

Design writing assignments that consider and make space for multiple cultural contexts. For example, if you have an assignment that asks students to write from a specific cultural perspective (e.g.--Imagine you are a U.S. diplomat advocating for X economic policy....), consider broadening the assignment to be more inclusive, inviting students to write from a country or cultural perspective of their choice. If students are expected to have certain contextual knowledge related to politics, history, cultural traditions, etc., be sure to provide and familiarize them with that knowledge (“CCCC statement,” 2020).

### Give clear, specific expectations for each assignment

Multilingual students at Hamilton have noted that they find it helpful when instructors have clearly written and expressed assignment expectations not only in prompts but also grading rubrics; reviewing these expectations in class conversations is important as well (“Effective Writing Assignments”). Specify the audience, purpose, and conventions of the assignment. When possible, try to be as specific as possible about how you will assess students. For example, when you include “grammar” in your grading criteria, what grammar are you referring to, and what aspects of grammar will you focus on when grading students? Similarly, review citation conventions and source usage expectations for your assignments when relevant. If possible, encourage and allow students to use sources written in multiple languages (see [Using your language as a resource](#) for information about using sources in multiple languages).

### Use Accessible Language

Instructors may use idioms, colloquialisms, phrasal verbs (e.g.-- “play out”), and/or culturally specific language that may be unfamiliar to students. Be mindful of whether or not these terms occur in your prompts and consider revising them for greater clarity. This also applies to common academic terms that may need to be clarified and explained (e.g.--summary, analysis and types of analysis--critical analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis, literary analysis, argumentative analysis, etc., thesis statement, reflection, expository essay, synthesis, etc.)

### Share models

Research has shown that models are a helpful resource for multilingual students in understanding genre and disciplinary conventions and expectations (Sowell, 2019; “NCTE position paper,” 2020). When providing students with models (or excerpts) of assignments, share attainable models that are accessible to them; these could be articles you have read in class or anonymous work from previous students. Be sure to review the models with students in class, focusing on what features of the assignment made it successful, and/or what aspects of the assignment did not work well and how they could be improved.

## Provide Adequate Time

Distributing assignment prompts well ahead of the deadline (at least 4 weeks) benefits all students by giving them time to plan for completion of the assignment, as well as meet with the necessary support well in advance of the due date (writing center tutors, attending office hours, etc.). You can also build deadlines into the assignment that help scaffold the work and account for stages of the writing process.

## Scaffold Assignments

Scaffolding involves breaking down assignments into smaller pieces completed over time (“What Makes a Good Writing Assignment?”). For example, if students are expected to write a research paper, they may be asked to submit a proposal, outline, annotated bibliography, etc. prior to submitting the entire paper. Scaffolding provides students with greater opportunities to ask questions, receive feedback from others, plan for an assignment, and it can also discourage procrastination. When scaffolding assignments include steps of the writing process encouraging students to prewrite/outline/brainstorm, complete multiple drafts, revise, edit, receive feedback from others, and make changes to the draft prior to the final submission. If possible, include aspects of the process in the grading criteria.

## Encourage and Normalize Writing Support

Recommend to all students that they visit [the Writing Center](#) prior to submitting assignments; share with your class how you work with others on your own writing and make clear that this is a typical part of the writing process. Offer opportunities for peer feedback and discussion, building in writing workshops and peer review sessions on assignments. You can also encourage students to meet with [a LITS Research Tutor](#) for support with using sources and creating citations.

## Sources

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