



Challenge Learners with Authentic Assignments

UDL CHECKPOINT 7.2: [Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity](#)

— Creating assignments and activities that are relevant to the course material while also being interesting, varied, and valuable to learners' interests can increase learner engagement and retention.

What is it?

Along with understanding material in different ways, each learner brings diverse background knowledge and experiences to each course and assignment. Additionally, learners are more receptive to information that is relevant to their own interests and futures. Because of this, it is important that instructors vary the scope and purpose of assignments as well as the manner in which the work is to be completed.

Why do it?

Not seeing the relevance or importance of a class activity can create barriers for learners. However, when learners are personally invested in an activity, they tend to work harder and retain more of the information, which will only improve their knowledge and results on the assignment. Additionally, by inviting personal responses and feedback through self-reflection, students can take ownership of their work, which will lead to improved work quality. Keeping learners' interests and goals in mind while creating class activities can improve learners' success on the specific assignment, in the course, and in their entire academic journey.

How can I apply it?

Here are some ways that you can better challenge learners and create more interest in the material.

- **Highlight the utility and importance of assignments.** While assigning an activity, highlight the authenticity of the assignment by explaining how the material can be beneficial to the learners' future (on a personal and/or professional level).
- **Vary the scope and purpose of each activity and assignment.** Create varied assignments that engage with a diverse group of students by keeping in mind learners' cultures, social understandings, ages, interests, genders, and skill levels.
- **Include learner response and self-reflection in activities.** Require learners to engage with the specific material in a more personal manner by asking them to explore the relevance of the assignment or activity within their own lives.
- **Offer varied methods of completing assignments.** Highlight the use of imagination when completing course material and offer various methods for engaging with and responding to the coursework.

Summary

One of the most important goals for instructors is to create coursework that is culturally and socially inclusive, interesting, and authentic to learners' varied interests. Challenging learners to engage with the material on a more personal level can improve academic results, specifically to the course and holistically to their academic career.