

## UNIT DESIGN TIPS & GUIDELINES

### Stage 2: Determine acceptable evidence.

*What evidence will show that students understand and can meet other unit goals?*

#### Performance Tasks:



- A performance task –
  - Requires **transfer** – i.e. a repertoire of knowledge and skill to be used wisely and effectively in a new situation - i.e. used with understanding
  - Asks students to “do” the subject, not just recall and plug in discrete learning, out of context
  - Is set in a novel situation, with little or no scaffolding or cues provided: the student has to think through what the task demands as part of the assessment (the “game” vs. the scaffolded and simplified “drills”)
  - should be as realistic as possible, in which students confront the same kinds of challenges, constraints, and options found in the real world
- A task, like any other aspect of STAGE 2, is meant to yield evidence of key elements in Stage 1; it is not meant to be a learning activity: validity is the primary concern, not whether it is interesting or fun as a task.
- A performance “task” may actually involve a variety of situations, performances, and products (i.e. it can be a “complex” task, with related sub-tasks).
- Writing the task in GRASPS form makes it likely that the task will involve authentic transfer: give the student a Goal, a Role, an Audience, a Setting, Performance/product demands, and a set of Standards and criteria by which work will be judged.
- Build in as much differentiation via options and alternatives in the situation(s) as is feasible – without corrupting the validity of the assessment. (i.e. the various options should be relatively equal in what they demand and reveal about a student’s understanding.)
- The goal is sufficient evidence for each student. Any group component to a task should be matched by evidence about the individual’s understanding. This can be accomplished by having separate parts to the task (such as a separate sub-task in which roles and perspective change – e.g. from group design team to solo reviewer) or by quizzes and prompts given to each student (and put in Other Evidence) that assess for the same goals.
- Don’t end up unwittingly assessing for evidence unrelated to your goals. Keep asking the “2-question validity test” and its implications: can the task be done well without understanding? Can the task be done poorly by someone with deep understanding? Then, the task will not yield valid evidence, by definition. Be especially careful of demanding a mode or method of assessment that favors some student ability over others in ways that are not at the heart of your goals, e.g. you end up assessing - unfairly - writing ability or multimedia facility instead of understanding of the subject.

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#### Rubric(s):

**R**

- Clarify the criteria by which constructed-response work should be judged, and develop rubrics for each continuum of quality OR choose from the pre-existing rubric trait library to build an analytic-trait rubric of multiple traits. It doesn't matter whether you have a single rubric in a matrix form for the various traits or separate pages for each rubric related to each criterion. What matters is that you break out all the independent variables central to success. That provides students with far more useful feedback than a single score or grade.
- Use as many distinct criteria as needed to ensure excellent feedback. Rule of thumb: the fewest independent variables. e.g. "accuracy" is independent of "well-developed" and "creative" so that at least those three criteria should be used.
- Make sure that you identify valid criteria for scoring that suit the transfer goals and understandings, not just the particulars of the performance tasks (e.g. if the Standard involves causes and effects of the Civil War, score "causal reasoning" and "insight of historical analysis" not just "high-quality museum display")

#### Other Evidence (quizzes, tests, prompts, observations, dialogues, etc.):

**OE**

- Identify the *specific questions* related to key knowledge and skill goals from Stage 1 that you expect students to be able to answer upon completion of this unit.
- Typical tests, quizzes, and homework belong in this box: discrete and uncomplicated assessment of skills and factual knowledge that isn't otherwise assessed in the performance tasks.
- Supplement all your performance tasks, as needed, to get more reliable and varied evidence of understanding, knowledge, and skill for *each individual student*. This is especially important if you claim that this unit addresses a Standard in an in-depth way, and the performance tasks are basically group projects. You need evidence for each student, ultimately.
- The goal is a photo album, not a single snapshot, for the assessments in the unit to be both valid and reliable.
- Don't confuse "assessment evidence" with "giving grades." Just because you plan to assess it doesn't mean you will give a grade to it. Nor does the assessment "score" need to translate mechanically into a "grade." If the task is difficult and new for students, then grade accordingly; if the point of the assessment is more for feedback, then don't make it a grade for achievement, only process and effort, etc. This is not to say: don't give grades. It is to say: don't confuse "feedback to students" with the separate act of "giving grades." [Local grading policy may be in need for discussion and revision as a separate issue.]