



Tips for Effective Preparatory Assignments

Preparatory Assignments include work students are asked to complete before coming to class. This could be done individually, in pairs or in small groups. Preparatory assignments usually take the form of readings, online activities, videos, and/or self-knowledge assessments.

In the revised curriculum, the purposes of assigning preparatory work are to:

- Ensure learners have the same baseline of knowledge when they enter the classroom
- Set learner's expectations regarding the material to be covered in class
- Use class time for engagement with the material: applying it; integrating it with previous learning, etc.

There is also a parameter established by the Block, Discipline and Theme Directors as follows: "Each distinct class session should require some preparatory work by students. To ensure students can complete the work required for each day of classes, the amount of preparatory time should not exceed 1 hour per each 1 hour of class."

Based on the experience with the Revised Curriculum thus far, the following are suggested:

- Before contemplating the preparatory work, consider the current knowledge of the learners. This will help you avoid assigning material that is either too easy or too hard. The Block and Discipline Directors can provide information on what the learners have already been exposed to in the Revised Curriculum (This will also help you with the design of your in-class session).
- In estimating the time required to complete the preparatory work, consider the learner--what may take a second or third year student an hour to read may require more time from a first year student.
- Provide some stopping points during the preparatory assignment where students can assess their own learning of the material. Every 15 minutes is suggested. Intermittent self-administered questions can help students identify what they need to spend more time on.
- The best preparatory work ends by asking the learner to do something to solidify the knowledge they have gained. Of the 22 most common Active Learning Techniques, those that best help solidify independently learned knowledge are:
 - o *Questions/Quizzes*
 - o *Defining Features matrices (empty outlines)*
 - o *Concept maps*
- Establish expectations: Tell the students (on Blackboard) how the ENTIRE session you have planned will run, from their preparatory to the review afterwards. Indicate what (at what level of detail) they should "master" in the preparatory work (videos, etc.); what you will cover in class, and what they should do after class to solidify their understanding of the concepts.