Checklist for the Design of Effective Research Assignments

(Adapted with permission from Maricopa Community College Library Instructional Council and Maricopa Center for Teaching and Instruction, http://libguides.maricopa.edu/content.php?pid=252244&sid=2082508)

Use the checklist below to help in your design and evaluation of a research assignment. Use the scale from 1-3 (1=Not Well and 3=Very Well) to address how well the assignment does the following:

ASSIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS			
Provides project parameters. (e.g., structure& mechanics, such as length/number of pages, length of speech, required headings or other formatting)	1	2	3
Clarifies that research can take time. (e.g., length of time to do research explained, breaks assignment into stages with different due dates)	1	2	3
Identifies number of sources required.	1	2	3
Defines types of sources required.	1	2	3
Specifies a specific citation style to use.	1	2	3
Specifies grading or rubric for assignment.	1	2	3
Defines assignment outcomes and/or how it relates to and supports course-level outcomes.	1	2	3
RESEARCH GUIDANCE			
Instructs on how best to select a topic, if applicable.	1	2	3
Directs students where to find information sources. (e.g., library catalog, databases, websites, etc.)	1	2	3
Specifies recommended sources to use. (e.g., specific databases, reference materials, newspapers, scholarly sources, primary sources, etc.)	1	2	3
Discusses how to do research. (e.g., recommended keyword searches, Boolean operators, database limiters features, etc.)	1	2	3
Allows for at least one component of the students research process to be reported and evaluated. (e.g., requires research journal, initial list of sources, online group discussion or wikis that show process, literature review, etc.)	1	2	3
Provides guidance on how to prevent plagiarism. (e.g., note-taking techniques, how to paraphrase, plagiarism prevention web sites, citation guides)	1	2	3
All relevant qualities of acceptable sources are listed and clearly defined.	1	2	3
Explains importance of currency and provides guidance on how to evaluate information based on timeliness.	1	2	3
SUPPORT			
Lists instructor availability for assistance with research.	1	2	3
Lists librarian availability.	1	2	3
Lists availability of other support services, as applicable. (e.g., writing center, tutoring, computers lab, etc.)	1	2	3

Place a checkmark by each statement that is TRUE. If you are unsure, please leave blank. If the statement is not applicable, indicate so with n/a.

_____ Recommended sources are available at the Library (online or in-person).

_____ Recommended sources are appropriate for the students' level. (Reading ability, knowledge of subject matter, and research skills should be considered.)

_____ Recommended resources are the most up-to-date at the Library.

_____ Research terminology is clear and does not create ambiguity (e.g. handouts state that students cannot use the Internet, yet students must locate articles in the Library's online subscription databases).

_____ Students are not overly restricted (e.g., too many simultaneous restrictions, such as publication date, word counts, and material type can make research nearly impossible for students).

_____ Reasonable expectations about the use of print sources versus online sources. (Sometimes the most recent information is no longer available in print. For example, many government publications are now only available electronically.)

_____ Students are allowed to make changes to their topics based on the reality of their research experience.

_____ Students receive enough technical "how to" instructions for researching, using, creating and evaluating digital sources such as blogs, Wikipedia, or streaming videos.

_____ Published research exists to support the research assignment.

_____ Students do not all research the exact same topic to ensure that the library collections offer enough resources.

_____ The assignment's deadline(s) allow(s) students sufficient time for initial exploration, full-blown research, creation of drafts, and final production.

_____ Students have received exemplary models for the research projects and understand instructor expectations.