

Wikipedia Assignments

as an e-Learning Component

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Chapter Outline

- 1 Good idea!
 - Overview
 - Case Studies

- 2 ... but how to make it work?
 - Recipes
 - Shortcuts
 - Ressources



Outline

1 Good idea!

- Overview
- Case Studies

2 ...but how to make it work?



The 21st century encyclopedia



WIKIPEDIA

- Started 2001, open source, content licensed under CC-BY-SA
- 35 million articles, 288 languages
- Largest edition: English, 4.8 million articles, 500 million unique readers
- the Internet's largest and most popular general reference work
- Written by about 100,000 volunteers
- 21st century's **outline**, **bibliography**, and **definition** of knowledge



Educational assignments

- Various types:
 - create an article
 - improve an article
 - run an experiment
- Various sizes: from a “class” of five to several thousand
- Various modes:
 - voluntary or compulsory
 - assessed with a mark or not
 - individual or group work
- Various expectations
 - make useful edits
 - add any type of content
 - achieve a quality mile stone (“good article”, “start class”)



Possible outcomes

1 Win–Win–Win–Win

- **Students**—media literacy, experience, impact
- **Local community**—knowledge and language preservation
- **Teachers**—feedback on assessment methods, impact
- **Global community**—new content, more hands and eyes

2 Lose–Lose–Lose–Lose

- **Students**—overwhelmed, lectured, driven away
- **Local community**—no valuable content
- **Teachers**—exposed to criticism
- **Global community**—lots of janitorial work, little gain



Case studies I

1 North of the Rio Grande (2008)

- English Wikipedia—[Project page](#)
- 26 students, 10 articles on Latin American literature
- Instructor is administrator on the English Wikipedia, 20,000 edits
- No tutors
- lots of help from 10 experienced Wikipedia editors
- Judged as full success, despite getting nowhere near the desired outcome (Featured Articles)

2 India Education Project (2011)

- English Wikipedia—[Project page](#)
- 670 students (520 never edited), no defined scope
- No main instructor
- Tutors were students and newbies on the English Wikipedia
- lots of intervention from experienced Wikipedia editors
- Judged as absolute debacle (plagiarism, language abilities)



Case studies II

3 Polytechnic of Namibia (2010)

- English Wikipedia—[Project page](#)
- 200 students, 190 articles on Namibia
- Main instructor 5,000 edits,
- tutors newbies but published academics
- no help from experienced Wikipedia editors
- somewhat successful but tutors didn't help at all

4 Polytechnic of Namibia (2012)

- English Wikipedia—[Project page](#)
- 2,000 students (1,500 never edited), 400 articles on Namibia
- Main instructor 10,000 edits, tutors newbies
- Tutors junior academics but non-published
- no help from experienced Wikipedia editors
- unsuccessful, instructor overwhelmed, tutors didn't help



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Recipe for disaster

- 1 Assessment designer not a Wikipedian
- 2 No prior training for tutors
- 3 Lecture focus on technical abilities (formatting, account creation)
- 4 Loose, if any, topic restriction
- 5 Strict deadline, punishment for non-submission
- 6 First non-essay writing experience for students
- 7 Students write in their second or third language
- 8 Large course
- 9 Ad-hoc design and implementation
- 10 No prior engagement with editor community



Recipe for success

- 1 Semester 1: Main instructor becomes a Wikipedian.
 - Can write a new article *of someone else's choice*, and make it stick
 - Is an active editor (min. 5 edits/month) with 3 months free of warnings
 - Can and does participate in policy debate
- 2 Semester 2: Main instructor trains tutors.
 - Tutors achieve the abilities of main instructor, semester 1
 - Tutors are examined on their abilities. Fail \Rightarrow no contract!
- 3 Semester 2: Main instructor designs assessment.
 - Realistic expectations, depending on student' level of writing and insight
 - Minimum example: "Add one sentence in grammatically correct **language** and neutral **wording**, **formatted** according to Wikipedia custom, and **referenced** to at least one **reliable** and **independent** secondary source."
- 4 Semester 3: Assessment deployed.



Shortcuts

- 1 Use smaller Wikipedia editions
 - Indigenous languages leave less room for plagiarism
 - Fewer editors, fewer rules
 - Smaller Wikipedia, more enthusiasm
- 2 Avoid freshmen
 - Senior students figure out themselves how to achieve set goals
 - Have considerable subject knowledge
- 3 Allow group work
 - Underachievers can wiggle through
 - Guaranteed level of discussion
- 4 Allow sandbox submissions
 - Less scrutiny by editor community
 - But more work for tutors and instructor



Available support

- **Wikipedia Education Program**
 - Instructional videos
 - Mailing list
 - Newsletter
 - Brochures to download (English, French, Portuguese, Italian)
- **English Wikipedia Tea House**
 - Newbie help
- **English Wikipedia School and University Projects**
 - Further links (course management portal, current courses)
- **Wikimedia Foundation**
 - Ship T-Shirts, brochure hardcopies
 - Facilitate liaison with other educators
 - all “official” advice
- **Individual editors or employees**
 - Tighe Flanagan ([Wikipedia—Email](#))
 - Peter Gallert ([Wikipedia—Email](#))



End of Presentation

Any questions?

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