# Chapter 11
# Transparency in Course Assessments:
## A Robust Indicator of a Student-Centered Teaching

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## ABSTRACT

*Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) has become an increasingly popular initiative among the higher education faculty learning communities in recent years. While using this transparency initiative, instructors not only prepare and implement lesson plans and course activities to achieve course specific learning outcomes, but they also share the rationale of their actions with the students. The growing literature supports that TILT strategies provide students an equitable learning opportunity. In this chapter, the author discusses the impact of transparency on students' achievements from the students' perspectives, integrating empirical data gathered from a survey given to the students enrolled in the transparent courses. Students' responses were overwhelmingly positive indicating that transparency gave them higher motivation, better clarity with course objectives, and more fulfilling engagement with their instructor and fellow students. It was also observed that instructors experienced more productive interaction, higher level of work satisfaction, and better course grades.*

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## INTRODUCTION

As a member of the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) Faculty Learning Community (FLC) at Albany State University (ASU), I got the opportunity to hear from my fellow faculties of the positive impact they had noticed in their students' learning as a result of embedding TILT dimensions into their teaching strategies. Their contagious excitement prompted me to delve into some books that advocated efficient course redesigns in higher education. I realized that TILT concepts were well aligned with my own continuous quest for effective teaching and preparing assessment materials that are simpler and more accessible for my students. I immediately incorporated some of the TILT dimensions into my assignments within my undergraduate level mathematics courses. In this chapter, I will discuss about my students' perception about TILT, its impact on their learning and their course grades. My assignment samples which I developed before and after becoming familiar with the TILT framework. I will share the perceptions of my colleagues regarding TILT, my own impressions of TILT, in terms of the challenges I faced at the outset, my rationale for using TILT, and my plans for the future.

TILT is primarily based on three–part transparency framework, namely purpose, task and criteria (Winkelmes et al, 2015). The instructor crafts, articulates, and includes these components in all course activities to guide the students' work.

### Purpose

The first component of TILT dimension pertains to the assignment's instructions, the purpose of completing it. The purpose must be explained in such a way that students understand and see the value of completing the assignment. Clarity in the purpose would motivate students to spend a good amount of time in the studying the relevant course materials and completing the assignment before due date (Winkelmes, 2019). Mary-Ann Winkelmes in her article "*How to Use Transparency Framework"* points out that most instructors design assignments thoughtfully, with a rationale and specific learning goal, but they miss explicitly sharing such rationale with their students. She further argues that students' metacognition and learning increase if they know in advance about the expected knowledge and skills gained from the assignment. On the other hand, asking students to complete assignments without giving this pertinent information on the value of completing the assignment will make them feel being involved is merely an arbitrary task with no rationale but simply required to earn a course grade. The clarity of the purpose can be covered by responding to the following questions.