# CAM Educator's Guide for PSA Assignment (Higher Ed)

Like all media production projects, this assignment can be adapted to suit different amounts of in-class time and homework. Here are some rough guidelines for assignments, in-class presentations, and group work. These can be adjusted to fit your own course’s needs. We also provide tips on facilitating the process of student media production, in which educators take on a role that is quite different from the conventional role of lecturing or grading written assignments.

## Potential assignments linked to PSAs

(See Higher Ed PSA Assignment for more information)

1. PSA script\*
2. Pitch presentation
3. Storyboard and shot list\*
4. Production plan presentation
5. Rough cut\*
6. Final cut
7. Film screening presentation plan (e.g., student plans for facilitating audience discussions)\*

\*These assignments can be completed as homework.

## In-class work flow and tips for facilitating media production work

There are several components of the PSA project that benefit from use of in-class time, especially when students can learn from and support students in different production groups. For example:

### Pitch presentations.

These offer an opportunity for students to hear the full range of ideas that their fellow students had and to consider which pitches will make the best media products.

### Storyboard and production planning.

Storyboarding and production planning can be completed as homework, but must be done with all members of the production group participating. Encourage students to place their scripts, storyboards, and/or plans on a board where everyone can see them, rather than having them on a small piece of paper that one person is holding. This practice encourages group ownership of the project and collaboration (rather than having one person ‘holding the cards.’) It’s also a good idea to ask students to organize their thoughts for a storyboard or shot list using post-its. That way, they can easily change the order that shots will be presented in and iteratively edit their plans.

Given that time is always limited, encourage students to think about ways to ‘divide and conquer’ in order to ensure that all project team members’ talents are included and that work is completed. Examples of ‘divide and conquer’ strategies:

* Make the division of labor explicit (i.e., who will search for images that are needed? Who will create text in an editing program? Who will tape film or find props or other assets?)
* Have one team member recording sound or narration while another is editing visuals.

These strategies should be made explicit during the planning process.

### Production plan presentation and rough-cut critique.

Each group should present their plan to the rest of the class. Let students know that the goal of these presentations is to help each group have the strongest piece possible and to share resources and ideas. Group presentations are also a great opportunity for team members to show their willingness to collaborate and contribute – i.e., if each team member is responsible for part of the presentation, it’s clear that they are a collaborative group. In contrast, if one person takes charge of the entire presentation, their ability to collaborate will not be evident.

It’s a great idea to give students a rough-cut deadline (e.g., at least 2-3 hours of project time before their final deadline) and have the whole class go around to each group’s editing computer to view their rough cut ‘gallery style’ (like walking around a gallery and viewing each piece). The rough cut offers an opportunity for

* ensuring scientific/content accuracy
* ensuring that students stay on task (with near-term deadlines)
* helping production teams view and critique their own work from the perspective of an audience
* bring the perspective of the entire class to the work in order to have the strongest set of pieces possible.

The instructor’s main role is to facilitate the critique session. We often find that it’s the students, not the instructor, that come up with the best suggestions for improving their own and each others’ work. Offering students the opportunity to strengthen each others’ work gives the entire class a sense of ownership and collaboration, while also reducing the burden on the instructor, especially if the instructor has expertise in climate change content, but not media production.

## Tips for facilitating critique sessions:

* Ask students to publicly appreciate team members whose effort was exemplary (e.g., so-and-so did an amazing job thinking of a metaphor that really hammered home our message.)
* Make sure that students who are viewing and critiquing another team’s work do not start with statements like, “If I were to do this piece, I would…” Instead, tell them to critique in the form of questions, i.e.,
  + “Do you have the resources to do…?”
  + “What is your key message?”
  + “Who is your audience?”
  + “What are you asking your audience to do?”
  + “Could you use xxx props/actors/music?”
* Encourage students who are critiquing others’ work to take the time to **listen** to the answers the group provides. It may also be a good idea for each group to assign a member to take notes on the suggestions and ideas that emerge from the critique session.