

Using Classroom Assessment Techniques to Provide Feedback

Classroom Assessment Techniques (Angelo & Cross, 1993) are simple methods that educators can use to collect feedback, early and often, on how well their students are learning. The purpose of classroom assessment is to provide faculty and students with information and insights needed to improve teaching effectiveness and learning quality. Faculty can use this information to make adjustments in their teaching practices. Educators can also share feedback with students, using it to help them improve their learning strategies and study habits in order to become more self-directed and successful learners.



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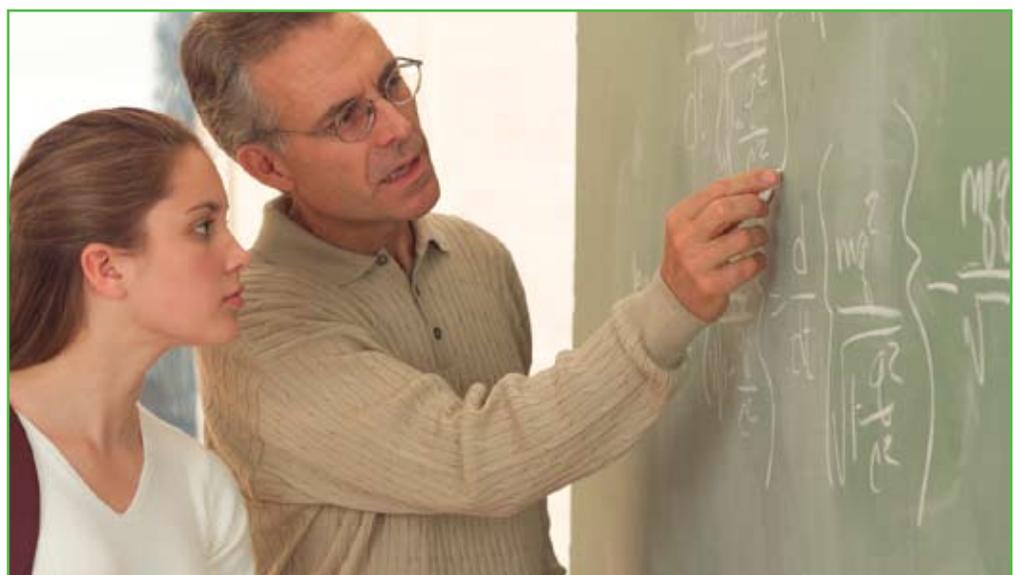
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Why Use Classroom Assessment Techniques?

Educators who assume that their students are learning what they are trying to teach them are often faced with disappointing evidence to the contrary when they grade tests and term papers. Too often students have not learned as much or as well as is expected. There are gaps, sometimes considerable ones, between what is “taught” and what is learned. By the time faculty notice these gaps in knowledge or understanding, it is frequently too late to remedy the problems. Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) are instrumental in understanding what students are learning and what teaching strategies are effective in a particular course.

Traditionally, CAT activities are administered at the beginning, middle or end of a class period using paper and pencil. From a student perspective, there is only a limited amount of time to properly reflect and respond to the activities. At the same time, faculty indicate that it takes a tremendous amount of time to collect, read and collate the paper-based responses, especially for large classes.

You can use a learning management system (such as Blackboard) to provide students with greater time flexibility to respond to the CAT activities and save yourself time by automating the process of collecting and collating student responses. For example, you can use the discussion board, quiz or survey tool within a learning management system to create and post the CAT activity before or after a classroom session. Students can respond to the activity “anytime, anywhere” outside of the classroom. You can “skim” the digitally collected feedback for trends and issues and then present and discuss the results during the following class session.



Give Me an Example

The *Minute Paper* is the single most commonly used classroom assessment technique because it provides a very simple way to collect written feedback on student learning. Traditionally, the technique is employed during the last few minutes of a class and requires students to respond to the following two questions on a sheet of paper or index card:

1. What was the most important thing you learned during this class?
2. What important question remains unanswered?

You can use the survey tool within a learning management system to automate this activity. Use these two questions in an anonymous survey and ask students to answer the questions outside of class time. You can then scan and trend the responses by cutting and pasting the text into a Microsoft Word document. Then post the anonymous survey responses to the course site and discuss the results with students during the next class session.

More Ideas

- Before class, design a background knowledge probe by creating two or three open-ended questions within a discussion board, a handful of short-answer questions using a survey tool, or a series of multiple choice questions through a test manager to probe students' existing knowledge of a particular concept, subject or topic.
- During class, use the learning management system to display and discuss the results from the Classroom Assessment Activities.
- After class, use the following techniques to continue to generate feedback:
 - Muddiest Point – Using a discussion board, survey tool or test manager, ask students to comment on their “muddiest point” (least understood concept) from a lecture, online discussion, homework assignment or video clip.
 - One Sentence Summary – Ask students to respond in one summary sentence to the following question about a particular topic: Who does what to whom, when, where, how and why?
 - What Is the Principle? – Post a few problems within the discussion board and then ask students to state the course-related principles that best apply to solving the problems.



Where Can I Go for More Information?

1. Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers, 2nd Ed.

Angelo, T.A. & Cross, K.P. (1993). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

This handbook offers teachers at all levels of experience detailed, how-to advice on classroom assessment - from what it is and how it works to planning, implementing and analyzing assessment projects.

2. Classroom Assessment Technique Examples

Descriptions and examples of the five most popular classroom assessment techniques in higher education. From Honolulu Community College's Teaching and Learning Centre.

<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/assess-2.htm>

3. Classroom Assessment Techniques Designed for Technology

An online paper that describes how to use technology to support a series of classroom assessment techniques for your students. From Mary Barone Martin of Middle Tennessee State University.

<http://www.mtsu.edu/~itconf/proceed99/Martin.htm>

4. Classroom Assessment Techniques

A series of examples of classroom assessment techniques based on Tom Angelo and Pat Cross' *Handbook of Classroom Assessment Techniques*. From Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville.

<http://www.siu.edu/~deder/assess/catmain.html>