



Assessment is Heating Up!



Jennifer Patterson, Ph.D.
Chair, Learning Assessment Committee
Professor of Management

Greetings Everyone. Serving as the LAC chair during this academic year alongside such an amazing team of assessment experts on the committee has been a privilege and an incredible learning experience. I have come to respect each member of our assessment team. I could not have imagined a better group of colleagues and have sincerely appreciated the support. As an example, our own LAC member, Meghan Carlson, has been the creative genius for this issue, and many of the previous issues of DataVersed, over this past academic year.

In addition, the end of term is rapidly approaching and the emphasis on assessments heats up and becomes increasingly more important. Another one of our talented LAC assessment experts (and CAT enthusiast), Dr. Caroline Seefchak, has authored this issue on helpful and effective Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs).

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Cont.

This issue also includes an interesting and informative interview with one of the Effectiveness Coordinators, Dr. Bill Kelvin. Finally, as a reminder, the self-paced Assessment 101 Canvas course, developed and monitored by another LAC member, Dr. Amy Trogan, is a great opportunity for gaining additional assessment guidance.

Don't forget to reach out to one of the LAC members for assessment assistance.

Please enjoy the rest of the term!

Jenny



CATs: Over Thirty Years of Providing Invaluable Insights

As faculty in higher education, we share a goal: that our teaching yields the highest quality of student learning. To accomplish this, we continually seek ways to measure student learning. Many college-level assessments, however, are summative evaluations of student learning that are given too late in a semester to remedy gaps in the ongoing process of learning. Faculty who seek better ways to monitor student learning throughout the semester should consider CATs. These techniques are designed to be simple, quick, and effective in providing feedback to both students and instructors to assure that learning is a continuous process.



Caroline Seefchak, Ph.D.
Professor of Literacy
LAC Representative, School of Education
Former LAC Chair

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs): A Handbook for College Teachers, by Thomas Angelo and K. Patricia Cross, originally published in 1993, was written for college and university professors as an overview of a variety of assessment methods and means by which to evaluate student learning in the college classroom. The CATs, or Classroom Assessment Techniques, are essential instructional practices that provide professors with insights into student learning, allowing for timely feedback on comprehension, identification of misconceptions, adjustment of teaching strategies, promotion of active engagement, and facilitation of student reflection, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience and promoting academic success.

Some common CATs, described in detail with examples and prompts in the Angelo and Cross book, are listed here. CATs aim to promote active learning, engage students in the learning process, and help instructors adjust their teaching strategies based on student understanding. Overall, CATs offer a practical framework for ongoing assessment and improvement in the classroom.

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Classroom Assessment Techniques

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Minute Paper: The Minute Paper is a classroom assessment technique where students spend a brief period at the end of a class session reflecting on and summarizing their learning, typically by answering two questions about the most important concept learned and any remaining questions or confusion.

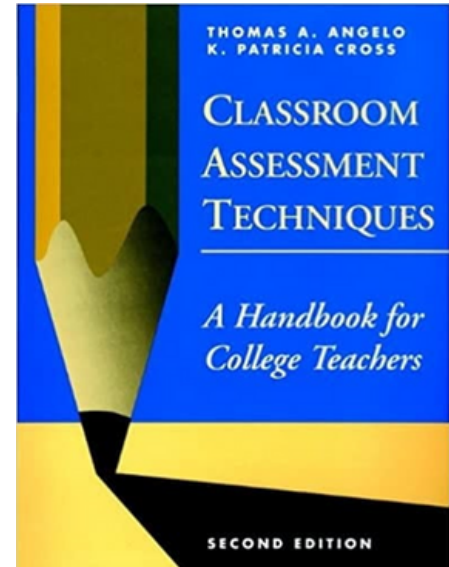
Muddiest Point: Students identify the concept or topic that is the least clear or most confusing to them, allowing the instructor to address areas of misunderstanding.

One-Sentence Summary: Students write a single sentence summarizing the main idea or key concept of a lesson or reading assignment, demonstrating comprehension and synthesis of information.

Think-Pair-Share: Students individually reflect on a question or prompt, then discuss their thoughts with a partner before sharing with the whole class, promoting active engagement and peer learning.

Exit Tickets: Students respond to a prompt or question related to the day's lesson before leaving the classroom, providing immediate feedback to the instructor about student understanding and areas for further clarification.

Gallery Walk: Students rotate around the classroom to view and respond to different prompts, questions, or visual displays related to the lesson, encouraging active learning and diverse perspectives.



Classroom Assessment Techniques

cont.

Peer Review: Students provide feedback on each other's work, such as essays, presentations, or projects, allowing for collaborative learning and development of critical evaluation skills.

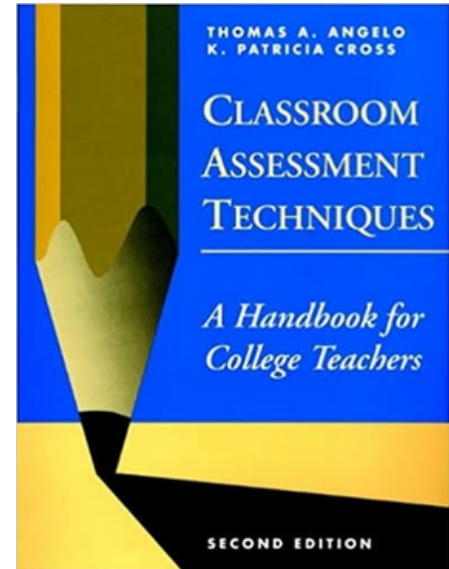
Concept Tests: Students answer multiple-choice or short-answer questions that assess their understanding of key concepts or principles, providing insight into individual and collective comprehension.

Jigsaw Technique: Students become experts on specific topics or subtopics and then teach their peers, promoting collaborative learning and deeper understanding through peer instruction.

Graphic Organizers: Students use visual frameworks, such as charts, diagrams, or timelines, to organize and represent information, aiding in comprehension, analysis, and synthesis of complex concepts.

Peer Instruction: Students engage in peer-led discussions or activities designed to deepen understanding and address misconceptions, fostering collaborative learning and peer teaching.

Source: Angelo, T. A., & Cross, K. P.: (1993). *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers* (2nd Ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass



Effectiveness Coordinator Spotlight

In this new section, we interview an Effectiveness Coordinator about their thoughts on what they do, as well as any suggestions they have for us in effective assessment strategies.

What is your favorite part about being an Effectiveness Coordinator?

Learning about how academia works from a systemic perspective. As an instructor, I've never thought much about accreditation, where those pressures come from or how they manifest. Even in my first year as a Learning Assessment Coordinator, I did not really understand exactly why we were doing what we were doing, though the idea of collectively working for self-improvement in the department and its curriculum made sense.



Bill Kelvin, Ph.D.
Professor of Communication Studies

What do you feel is most important about assessment at FSW, and for the areas you are a coordinator for?

My main goal in assessment has been to work toward harmonization. Ideally if an academic unit is collecting data on an assignment, then we should be able to trust that the instructions were identical, or at least highly similar, as were the conditions under which the students completed the assignment. I have found out that sometimes individual instructors alter assignments for one reason or another, which might make sense to them at the time, but can render the data collected flawed, or unusable. Something as simple as naming assignments in identical or identifiable fashion is crucial, and yet easily disrupted. The Communication Studies academic unit's common assessment tool, the informative speech assignments (outline and performance / delivery) tend to have similar instructions, but can be assessed differently because each instructor's judgment is idiosyncratic. For this reason, we invite every instructor to collaborate twice a year and discuss various aspects of performance and assessment. As a simple example, we decided as an academic unit that a collared, short-sleeved "polo" style shirt could count as "professional attire." There was some debate about that, but once the group decided, it makes our assessment practices better aligned.

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Effectiveness Coordinator Spotlight cont.

What is something that you found helpful in your role as an Effectiveness Coordinator?

Examining instructions from other instructors in other departments and comparing them to the general education competency rubrics they are, ostensibly, based on. When there is a mismatch, it shows that maybe the instructor should attend more closely to the competency, or that the competency is not the right one for that course.

Also examining goals in different academic units' assessment reports. Once I had a better understanding of the breadth of goals out there, it helped me liaise with others better on fine-tuning their own goals.

Have you found yourself surprised by what you've measured so far?

The only thing that surprised me was that scores are going up across many different departments on objective exams, mostly since the covid disruption. I think the move to online testing may have increased students' motivation and ability to share resources.

What's a fun fact about yourself?

I have a love of learning languages. Spanish is the only one I am reasonably fluent in, because I studied it in middle and high school, but I have learned simple phrases and some counting, etc., in a dozen or so languages. I can say hello, thank you and goodbye intelligibly over large swaths of the globe. A parlor trick mostly, but sometimes I find it makes people smile when I speak their language, if only a word or two.

Assessment 101



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A stylized illustration of a swampy landscape. In the foreground, there are tall green and yellow reeds. A white heron with a blue crest stands on a small island in the water. In the background, there are rolling green hills and a light blue sky. A green alligator is partially visible in the water on the right side.

Self-paced!

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