



Classroom Assessment Techniques: Overview

Classroom Assessment Techniques are a collection of strategies designed to help instructors collect systematic feedback regarding student learning. Also commonly referred to as *CATs*, they have been a mainstay of the literature regarding teaching in higher education since the early 1990s. These frequent, low-stakes assessments allow instructors to recognize the gaps between what is taught and what is learned, and they help students retain course content more efficiently and effectively.

Simply put, classroom assessments help you better understand and promote learning while helping your students become more self-directed learners. These techniques are based on the assumption that the most beneficial feedback occurs in the midst of the learning process, as opposed to waiting until large exams or projects are completed and students view the learning as being over and done.

Angelo and Cross (1993, pp. 7-11) ground the use of classroom assessments in seven assumptions:

1. The quality of student learning is directly, although not exclusively, related to the quality of teaching. Therefore, one of the most promising ways to improve learning is to improve teaching.
2. Effective assessment begins with clear goals. Teaching effectiveness improves when instructors make their goals and objectives explicit and then get specific feedback regarding the extent to which students are achieving these goals.
3. To improve their learning, students need to receive focused feedback early and often—before they are evaluated for grades. They also need to learn how to assess their own levels of understanding.
4. In order to best understand students' learning, instructors need specific and timely information about the particular students in their classes.
5. Even in research institutions, teaching is an important facet of a faculty member's career. Implementation of classroom assessments is one mechanism that enables a faculty member to develop as a teacher.



6. Classroom assessment does not require specialized training and can be successfully implemented in all disciplines.
7. And finally, by collaborating with colleagues and actively involving students in classroom assessment efforts, faculty (and students) perceive greater satisfaction with learning.

Learning can and does take place without the benefit of teaching. However, there is no teaching without learning (Angelo & Cross, 1993). By closely observing students in the process of learning and providing targeted feedback, you are less likely to experience the unhappy surprise of students not doing as well as expected on larger assessment tasks. Implementing a variety of classroom assessments can help ensure that your teaching results in significant students' learning.