

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) by Angelo and Cross (1993)

Original Reference (all subsequent page numbers refer to this reference):

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

<http://www.sinclair.edu/about/learning/assessment/resources/atm/cat/>

“Classroom Assessment is an approach designed to help teachers find out what students are learning in the classroom and how well they are learning it.” (p. 4) This approach has the following characteristics:

- **Learner-Centered**

“Classroom Assessment focuses the primary attention of teachers and students on observing and improving learning, rather than on observing and improving teaching... Classroom Assessment can provide information to guide teachers and students in making adjustments to improve learning.” (p. 4)

- **Teacher-Directed**

“Classroom Assessment respects the autonomy, academic freedom, and professional judgment of college faculty...the individual teacher decides what to assess, how to assess, and how to respond to the information gained through the assessment. Furthermore, the teacher is not obliged to share the result of Classroom Assessment with anyone outside the classroom.” (p. 4)

- **Mutually Beneficial**

“Because it is focused on learning, Classroom Assessment requires the active participation of students. By cooperating in assessment, students reinforce their grasp of the course content and strengthen their own skills at self-assessment. Their motivation is increased when they realize that faculty are interested and invested in their success as learners...Faculty also sharpen their teaching focus by continually asking themselves three questions: ‘What are the essential skills and knowledge I am trying to teach?’ ‘How can I find out whether students are learning them?’ ‘How can I help students learn better?’ As teachers work closely with students to answer these questions, they improve their teaching skills and gain new insights.” (pp. 4-5)

- **Formative**

Classroom Assessment's “purpose is to improve the quality of student learning, not to provide evidence for evaluating or grading students;... [they] are almost never graded and are almost always anonymous.” (p. 5)

- **Context-Specific**

“Classroom Assessments have to respond to the particular needs and characteristics of the teachers, students, and disciplines to which they are applied...what works well in one class will not necessary work in another.” (p. 5)

- **Ongoing**

“Classroom Assessment is an ongoing process, best thought of as the creating and maintenance of a classroom ‘feedback loop.’ By employing a number of simple Classroom Assessment Techniques that are quick and easy to use, teachers get feedback from students on their learning. Faculty then complete the loop by providing students with feedback on the results of the assessment and suggestions for improving learning. To check on the usefulness of their suggestions, faculty use Classroom Assessment again, continuing the ‘feedback loop.’ As the approach becomes integrated into everyday classroom activities, the communications loop connecting faculty and students -- and teaching to learning -- becomes more efficient and more effective.” (p. 6)

- **Rooted in Good Teaching Practice**

“Classroom Assessment is an attempt to build on existing good practice by making [feedback on students' learning] more systematic, more flexible, and more effective. Teachers ask questions, react to students' questions, monitor body language and facial expressions, read homework and tests, and so on. Classroom Assessment provides a way to integrate assessment systematically and seamlessly into the traditional classroom teaching and learning process.” (p. 6)

Classroom Assessment is based on 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.” (p. 7)
2. “To improve their effectiveness, teachers need first to make their goals and objectives explicit and then to get specific, comprehensible feedback on the extent to which they are achieving those goals and objectives.” (p. 8)
3. “To improve their learning, students need to receive appropriate and focused feedback early and often; they also need to learn how to assess their own learning.” (p. 9)
4. “The type of assessment most likely to improve teaching and learning is that conducted by faculty to answer questions they themselves have formulated in response to issues or problems in their own teaching.” (p. 9)
5. “Systematic inquiry and intellectual challenge are powerful sources of motivation, growth, and renewal for college teachers, and Classroom Assessment can provide such challenge.” (p. 10)
6. “Classroom Assessment does not require specialized training; it can be carried out by dedicated teachers from all disciplines.” (p. 10)
7. “By collaborating with colleagues and actively involving students in Classroom Assessment efforts, faculty (and students) enhance learning and personal satisfaction.” (p. 11)

Angelo and Cross (1993) suggest beginning the Classroom Assessment process by choosing only one or two of the simplest CATs and using them in only one class. In this way planning, preparation time, energy for completing the task, and risk are minimized. In most cases, trying out a simple CAT will

require only a few minutes out of a single class meeting. After trying one or two CATs, faculty can decide whether this approach is worth further time and energy. The **three main steps** in this process are:

Step 1: Planning

Decide which class will be selected and which CAT or CATs will be used. Keep things simple.

Step 2: Implementing

Make sure the students know what you are doing and that they clearly understand the procedure. Collect the responses and analyze them as soon as possible.

Step 3: Responding

Let students know the results of the CAT and what you plan to do based on that information (what Angelo and Cross refer to as “closing the feedback loop”).

Five suggestions for a successful start:

1. “If a Classroom Assessment Techniques does not appeal to your intuition and professional judgment as a teacher, don't use it.” (p. 31)
2. “Don't make Classroom Assessment into a self-inflicted chore or burden.” (p. 31)
3. “Don't ask your students to use any Classroom Assessment Technique you haven't previously tried on yourself.” (p. 31)
4. “Allow for more time than you think you will need to carry out and respond to the assessment.” (p. 31)
5. “Make sure to ‘close the loop.’ Let students know what you learn from their feedback and how you and they can use that information to improve learning.” (p. 31)

Classroom Assessment Techniques Websites

<http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/teaching-guides/assessment/cats/>

<http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/cat.html>

http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/classroom_assessment_techniques_intro.pdf

http://pages.uoregon.edu/tep/resources/newteach/fifty_cats.pdf