

# Tips for Quick and Easy Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs)

CATs are spot checks for understanding that are quick, easy, and effective. The CATs below require little preparation time, but provide a wealth of knowledge about students' learning. Additionally, students benefit from the opportunity to check their own comprehension and reorganize their ideas if necessary. These activities are appropriate for initiating, clarifying, and summarizing information at any point in a given class session.

## Identifying Learner Attitudes, Values, and Self-awareness

- Ask students to complete a brief *Course-related Self-confidence Survey* that measures their confidence in at least three skills or abilities important to success in the course (Angelo & Cross, 1993). Make sure your students know their responses are anonymous.
- Suspend a lecture with a low-preparation *Punctuated Lecture* that allows students to listen, stop, reflect, write, and give feedback to the instructor in the form of short, anonymous notes (Angelo & Cross, 1993).
- Conduct a *Classroom Opinion Poll* related to one or two issues where students can respond yes or no on a short polling form (Angelo & Cross, 1993).

## Assessing Prior Knowledge, Recall, and Understanding

- Draft one or two open-ended questions as a *Background Knowledge Probe* to emphasize important information and to determine an appropriate starting point for a given lesson (Angelo & Cross, 1993).
- Assign a *Minute Paper* during the first or last few minutes of class (Angelo & Cross, 1993). Have students write a paragraph about their understanding of a particular topic or an assignment.
- Have students describe the *Muddiest Point* in a lecture, discussion, homework assignment, or field experience in a course that emphasizes integrating, synthesizing, and evaluating information (Angelo & Cross, 1993).
- Have students identify a web of concepts connected to one point in a *Focused Listing* (Angelo & Cross, 1993). This listing can help students focus attention on the significant aspects of one theory, person, or concept.

## Assessing Higher Order Thinking Skills (analysis, synthesis, problem solving, and application)

- Provide a prompt eliciting thoughtful advantages and disadvantages in relation to an issue or dilemma. Then assign a *Pro and Con Grid* that allows students to analyze the costs and benefits of an issue (Angelo & Cross, 1993).
- Have students create a *Concept Map* that analyzes and synthesizes ideas from readings or discussions (Angelo & Cross, 1993). Afterwards, ask students to post their maps (electronically or physically) for peer feedback. Students can organize their map around one idea or question.
- Ask students to make an *Application Card* that presents one possible, real-world application of a principle, theory, or procedure (Angelo & Cross, 1993). Encourage creativity instead of reliance on text-book and lecture examples.

### References

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