Are Students Learning in Your Online Course?

In this issue of Online Teaching Coaching newsletter, we explore how to use **Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs)** to get just-in-time feedback from your students about their learning.

CATs are brief non-graded or low-stakes activities used for assessment & feedback from students. CATs can tell you about students’ understanding, skills & knowledge, and also their reactions to instructional methods & course design. You then can use results and feedback from CATs to guide just-in-time changes or adjustments needed to improve learning in your online course.

### USING CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES (CATS) IN YOUR ONLINE COURSE

Here are steps to plan and use CATs for just-in-time feedback about student learning during your course.

(Adapted from "Classroom Assessment Techniques Teaching Guide" by Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching, Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License)

1. **DECIDE**
   - Decide what you want to know about your students’ learning and their course experience. What feedback are you seeking?

2. **PLAN**
   - Choose and plan appropriate CAT that will provide this feedback. What CAT is consistent with your teaching style? How can you implement CAT easily in your online course?

3. **CONDUCT**
   - Conduct CAT activity. Post the activity for students to complete in the asynchronous online course. For synchronous course, plan time for students to complete CAT during real-time class session.

4. **REVIEW**
   - Review CAT results to find out about your students’ learning. What small changes can you make right now to “fine-tune” or adjust the online course to better support student learning?

5. **FOLLOW-UP**
   - Tell your students what you learned from CAT activity and how you used this information to make changes to improve the course. Let them know that their participation in CAT made a difference!

View the CATS infographic online | Check Out Classroom Assessment Techniques (Stearns Center)

Learn More about Using Classroom Assessment Techniques Online
- Cross, T. (2016, October 14). Online Discussion Forums as Assessment Tools, Faculty Focus, Magna Publications.
Examples of CAT Activities for Feedback about Students’ Learning Online
(Click on the name of each activity to learn more)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exit Tickets</th>
<th>KWL</th>
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<td><strong>Exit Tickets</strong> can help you quickly assess student understanding of specific concepts. What concepts do students feel they've mastered and what they may still find challenging or unclear?</td>
<td><strong>KWL</strong> is acronym for “what you know, what you want to know, what you have learned”.</td>
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For **asynchronous online course**, create CAT activity at the end of a module using Blackboard survey tool.

For **synchronous online courses**, create a poll in Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to check students’ understanding of important concepts during the class session.

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<tr>
<th>Muddiest Point</th>
<th>One-Sentence Summary</th>
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<td>“<strong>Muddiest Points</strong>” are concepts that are unclear or confusing to students. At appropriate intervals during your course, consider having students each identify their “Muddiest Point”. Use the list of “Muddiest Points” to guide possible changes in your course and teaching.</td>
<td>Want a quick snapshot of what students are learning and understanding in your course? Have students prepared a one-sentence summary. You can ask for one-sentence summary of what they’ve learned to check for their understanding of important concepts. You can use this CAT after they’ve viewed a video or completed a reading, activity or assignment.</td>
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For **asynchronous online course**, create a “Muddiest Point” discussion forum in Blackboard. Set up the forum so that students don't see others' postings until after they post first.

For **synchronous course**, prompt students to post their “Muddiest Point” in the chat area during a Zoom class session.

Encourage students to help each other to clarify their “Muddiest Points” in the discussion forum or in the real-time session.

In **synchronous online course**, have students post their one-sentence summaries as brief videos into a Blackboard discussion, using tools such as Harmonize or VoiceThread. (Submit request to Stearns Center Digital Learning for licenses to access to these tools in Blackboard.)

In **synchronous online course**, have students post their one-sentence summaries to Zoom chat at the same time, creating a “chat waterfall”. Then read some of the chat postings to the class; save the chat and share with students after the session. Review offline to check their understanding and learning.

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