



HLC Accreditation Evidence

Title: Assessment Professional Development: CAT
FAQs

URL:

<https://internal.bartonccc.edu/faculty/assessment/faq>

Office of Origin: Vice President of Instruction

Contact(s):

- Coordinator of Assessment



BARTON

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CAT FAQs

Read below to find answers to Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) frequently asked questions.

Q: Why does Barton require that faculty document their CAT activities?

A: Barton's assessment plan involves five levels of student learning: Class, Course, Program, Degree and Institution. Activities at all five levels are designed to assess student learning; however, the classroom is the place where teachers and students directly interact; thus, the classroom lays the foundation for all of the other levels. Although Barton requires documentation of only one CAT per semester, some faculty use CATs much more frequently; others do only the minimum of one CAT per semester. Completing the CAT report serves two important purposes: 1) it fulfills the Course-Level documentation requirement for Barton's Assessment Plan, and 2) it documents that Barton faculty are directly involved in the assessment of student learning.

Regardless of how often you incorporate CATs into your classes, their primary purpose is to inform YOU and YOUR STUDENTS about their learning. By employing CATs, you can satisfy your scholarly curiosity about your students' learning

before it's too late - before students have taken the test or written the essay - before you're surprised by poor performance.

CATs also provide a mechanism for faculty to share student-learning concerns and successes with colleagues. Instead of telling a colleague, "I think my students really understood my lecture today," administering a CAT will allow you to share exactly what your students did or did not understand. CATs can serve as the springboard for collegial conversations about student learning.

Q: How do I report Classroom Assessment activities?

A: Reporting classroom assessment activities is easier than ever! Submit your CAT using the online survey: <http://tinyurl.com/submitCAT>.

Q: I need to learn more about CATs. Where can I find information?

A: The primary source for information about CATs can be found in the book Classroom Assessment Techniques by Tom Angelo and Pat Cross. Their book describes 50 different CATs that cover a wide variety of assessment needs and situations, including assessing students' skills, attitudes, prior knowledge, self-awareness, and reactions. Cross and Angelo also provide tips for successful CAT administration, application examples, discipline-specific adaptations, step-by-step instructions, cautions, best-practices, and research foundation. The book is available for check-out at the Barton County Community College Library and in each academic division office complex. Off-campus faculty should check with their local counselor or site coordinator who may have a copy.

Q: Do I have to use one of the Classroom Assessment Techniques described in Angelo and Cross' book?

A: Not necessarily. As the classroom instructor, you are in the best position to understand what it is you wish to assess, and therefore, to understand the best method for assessing it. Although Cross and Angelo's book provides a wide variety of

CATs, it is by no means comprehensive. Your colleagues are excellent resources for innovative classroom assessment techniques.

Check out the following links to online CAT resources:

tep.uoregon.edu/resources/assessment/cats/cats

www.mtsu.edu/%7Eitconf/proceed99/Martin.htm#Abstract

honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/assess-1

honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/assess-2

www.mines.edu/Academic/affairs/circuit/asho

Q: Why do Cross and Angelo advocate that CATs be un-graded and anonymous?

A: Generally following a learning activity (lecture, reading assignment, group activity, guided practice, etc.), a CAT is designed to inform the teacher about his students' learning. The SOLE purpose of the CAT is to improve student learning by first determining whether and to what degree students learned whatever was expected. Using a graded assignment defeats the purpose of the CAT in that the grade itself sends students the message that learning is complete - whether it's true or not, most students believe that there is no opportunity for improvement once a grade has been assigned. Even if there is such an opportunity, once a grade has been assigned, the focus naturally shifts to improving the grade, not the learning.

Making the CAT an anonymous activity guarantees that the focus will not be on individual student performance; rather, the teacher will be able to focus on the areas in which students performed well and in which they performed poorly. An added benefit is that the teacher is free to share student examples without unintentionally revealing any student's identity.

Q: Why aren't tests, quizzes, and essays considered acceptable CAT activities?

A: All of the above examples do gauge student learning; however, the primary purpose of these activities is not to improve student learning. Rather, it's to assign a grade based on student performance or mastery. Naturally, teachers do use results from tests, quizzes and other graded assignments to make instructional improvements to their courses; however, these changes may not take place until the next time the teacher covers that material with another group of students. Similarly, teachers may re-cover material when the majority of students perform poorly on a test or quiz, but most teachers do not have time to do so every time students perform poorly on a graded assignment. By their nature, tests, quizzes, and major assignments are designed to cover a significant amount of content (several chapters, units, etc.). Conversely, CATs are designed to provide a snapshot of student learning following a lecture, reading assignment, or other brief learning activity.

Q: What happens to my CAT Form after I turn it in?

A: Your CAT form simply serves to document that you have fulfilled this obligation. Department chairs will receive CAT data submitted from members of their departments. Information provided to department chairs will not be identified by individual faculty members. Department chairs are encouraged to post CAT information in their department's online shell.

Supervisors will receive individual faculty results, and your supervisor may communicate with you about your CAT to offer suggestions or congratulations or to request information. CAT results will not be used to evaluate faculty performance or to determine salaries and/or future teaching assignments.

At the close of the academic year, the Assessment Coordinator(s) and the Coordinator of Instructional Research will compile reports of faculty-members' CAT activities. These reports are then compiled into one report which is then shared with the Board of Trustees and included in the Annual Assessment Report.

Q: What are the general steps I should follow before administering a CAT?

A: According to Cross and Angelo*, teachers should plan, implement, and respond to the results of an activity involving a Classroom Assessment Technique. Below is an outline of Cross and Angelo's steps:

1. Plan a Classroom Assessment activity
 - a. Choose the class in which to administer the CAT
 - b. Focus on an "assessable question" about student learning
 - c. Choose the Classroom Assessment Technique that will effectively answer your "assessable question"
 - d. Prepare your students for the assessment activity, explaining its purpose and format

2. Implement the Classroom Assessment activity
 - a. Teach a "target" lesson related to the question being assessed
 - b. Using the selected CAT, assess learning by collecting feedback on your "assessable question"
 - c. Analyze the feedback, turning the data (results) into usable information

3. Respond to the results of the Classroom Assessment
 - a. Interpret the results and formulate an appropriate response/strategy to improve learning
 - b. Communicate the results to students and discuss the response/strategy
 - c. Implement the response/strategy to improve student learning
 - d. Evaluate the Classroom Assessment activity's effect(s) on teaching and learning

*Angelo, Thomas A. and K. Patricia Cross. Classroom Assessment Techniques. 2nd edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993. 34.

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