CAT's

Techniques for Assessing Course-Related Knowledge and Skills

Assessing Prior Knowledge, Recall, and Understanding

1. **BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE PROBE** - can use on the first day of class, or before introducing a new topic. Prepare 2/3 open-ended, 5/6 short answer, or 10/20 multiple-choice questions that probe the students' existing knowledge. At next class meeting, let the students know the results and how this will affect them as learners.

2. **FOCUSED LISTING** - use as a brainstorming technique to generate definitions/descriptions of topics. Ask students to take 3-5 minutes and list words or phrases that describe concept (can be used to generate class discussion or then have students form groups to compare lists and form the best overall description of topic).

3. **MISCONCEPTION/PRECONCEPTION CHECK** - particularly useful in classes with controversial/sensitive issues. Select a handful of troublesome beliefs that are common and most likely to interfere with students' learning, and create a simple questionnaire. Explain to your students the purpose and when they should expect to receive feedback.

4. **EMPTY OUTLINES** - instructor provides students with an empty or partially completed outline of an in-class lecture or assigned homework reading and gives them limited amount of time to fill in the blank spaces.

5. **MEMORY MATRIX** - instructor hands out a two-dimensional diagram, rectangle divided into rows and columns used to organize info and illustrate relationships - row and column headings are given but the cells are left empty for students to fill in information. Can turn in for an individual grade or have students work in groups.

6. **ONE MINUTE PAPERS** - in the last 10 minutes of class, ask the following questions, “the most imp thing that you have learned today?,” “1-2 imp questions that have regarding the lecture?,” “what subject would you like to know more about?” (can also ask questions regarding the lecture or chapter) Have students write down answers, collect - can be used to start the next class lecture, etc.

7. **MUDDIEST POINT** - 5-10 minutes before the end of class, ask students’ “What was the muddiest point in...?” Could be in reference to a discussion, homework assignment, movie, play, etc. Allow verbal responses that are addressed immediately, and/or collect written responses from which you choose 1 to start the next class.
1. **CATEGORIZING GRID** - students are presented with a grid containing 2-3 important categories from what they have been studying, along with a scrambled list of terms/images/equations, etc. that belong in one or more categories. Give students limited time to complete (individual or group), can use as brainstorming technique or for grade.

2. **DEFINING FEATURES MATRIX** - requires students to categorize information/concepts according to the presence (+) or absence (-) of important defining features, helps them identify and make explicit distinctions between concepts.

3. **PRO AND CON GRID** - quick analysis of by class of the pros/cons, costs/benefits, advantages/disadvantages of a concept/issue. Forces students to go beyond their first reaction and search for two sides to an issue. Can be used in class or as homework, individual or group.

4. **CONTENT, FORM, AND FUNCTION OUTLINES** - student analyzes the "what" (content), "how" (form), and "why" (function) of a particular message. Could be journal article, poem, critical essay, advertisement, etc. Students writes brief notes in the form of an outline that can be read quickly.

5. **ANALYTIC MEMO** - students to write a 1-2 page analysis of a specific problem or issue, generally for a specific audience (employer, client, etc.) that needs the students' analysis to inform decision making.
1. **ONE SENTENCE SUMMARIES** - have students answer these questions on a specific topic, and then synthesize answer into one long, informative, and grammatical sentence: Who/What, When, Where, Why, How?

2. **WORD JOURNAL** - requires a 2-part response. First, student will summarize a short text read in a single word, next the student writes a paragraph or two explaining why they chose that particular word to summarize the text.

3. **APPROXIMATE ANALOGIES** - have students complete the 2nd half of an analogy-A is to B as X is to Y, etc., to which the instructor has prepared the first half.

4. **CONCEPT MAPS** - have students draw/diagram a map connecting the major topic of focus with what they consider its most important features/other ideas and concepts that they have learned/etc-can use for class discussion or group work.

5. **INVENTED DIALOGUES** - students can either select and weave together actual quotes from primary resources, or have them "invent" reasonable quotes that fit the character and context of the speakers.

6. **ANNOTATED PORTFOLIOS** - have students put together a limited number of examples of their work (creative writing, research papers, art, poems, etc.), along with a commentary as to why each example is significant.

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Assessing Skills in Application and Performance

1. **DIRECTED PARAPHRASING** - students are directed to paraphrase part of a lesson for a specific audience and purpose, using their own words. Can be used as a refresher technique or as a graded assignment.

2. **APPLICATION CARDS** - after students have heard/read about an important principle, generalization, theory, or procedure, the instructor hands out an index card and asks them to write down at least one possible, real-world application for what they have just learned.

3. **STUDENT-GENERATED TEST QUESTIONS** - focus on an exam that is 2-3 weeks away, have students generate 3 or 4 test questions and answers. Decide before you assign the questions what type of format, and perhaps certain subjects that you would like to cover.

4. **HUMAN TABLEAU OR CLASS MODELING** - have groups of students create "living" scenes or model processes to show what they know (ex) students pose as figures in a painting, reenact a Druid ritual, model operation of a fuel system in a car engine, model how the human visual system works.

5. **PAPER OR PROJECT PROSPECTUS** - brief, structured first-draft plan for a term paper or project, can include topic, purpose, intended audience, major questions to be answered, basic organization, and the time and resources required, etc.

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