

**A Very Quick, Individual Approach to Learning
about Classroom Assessment**

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Classroom Assessment Addresses Two Key Areas

1. How are students responding to my teaching and instructional tasks?
2. What are my students really learning?

Classroom Assessment Benefits For Faculty

- ❖ Makes students partners in learning
- ❖ Engages students in their own learning, which helps student retention
- ❖ Provides quick feedback on what students are learning, without the bother of tests and quizzes
- ❖ Provides information about how students are responding to different teaching techniques
- ❖ Encourages instructional innovation
- ❖ Fosters rapport with students
- ❖ Models intellectual inquiry and using data to make changes and improvements

Classroom Assessment Benefits Students

- Engages them – very important to student retention, especially among high risk students
- Shows them how to be learning partners with teachers
- Helps focus their attention on teaching/learning issues the instructor deems important
- Promotes students thinking about how they learn, and monitoring their own learning
- Shows how an instructor seeks to continuously improve

Classroom Assessment is a way to gather information on what we do

In **our** classrooms

With **our** students

With **our** subject matter

With **our** teaching styles

With all the **constraints we** have on **our**
time and energy

Classroom Assessment is

Formative - not summative

Action-oriented - not research-oriented

Learner-centered and specific - not student generalized

Teacher-centered - not institution-centered

Beneficial to current students - not focused
on possible future changes

Small scale - not large scale

Applicable to a particular teacher and subject - not to everyone

An integral part of effective teaching - not
“another add-on”

Practical - not esoteric

K. Patricia Cross, who developed the classroom assessment concept, defines it as

“... the systematic study of how students are responding to our efforts to teach them.”

How might this affect your teaching and interactions with students and colleagues?
Have you participated in, or conducted any studies yourself, of the effect of your teaching on students?

Tom Angelo, the other ‘pioneer’ in classroom assessment, writes

“The purpose of classroom assessment is to provide faculty and students with information and insights needed to improve teaching effectiveness and learning quality.”

Classroom Assessment helps us

Focus on learning

Define what is important in **our** teaching

Gather information on what **we** do

Determine ways to be even more successful
at **our** teaching

Discuss teaching and learning with **our**
colleagues from a base of data

Clarify how different teaching strategies
relate to **our** specific course objectives

Classroom Assessment addresses questions such as

Are **my students learning** what I think I am teaching?

Who **is learning** and who **is not learning**?

What am **I** doing that is useful for **these students**?

What am **I** doing that is not useful **for these students**?

Classroom Assessment Points to Remember

1. **We are not supposed to be perfect**
2. Not every student is going to like us or what we do as teachers
3. We cannot please everyone, nor should we try
4. Different students will respond in different ways
5. The same student may respond in different ways at different times
6. Students mature, just as instructors do. We cannot expect new students to be sophisticated in their responses
7. Concentrate on doing the most good for the most people
8. Look at #7 again. This means focus on the majority of responses, not the one or two on the fringes

Look at #2, #3, and #7 again – what are some implications when you review student comments, particularly feedback on your teaching?

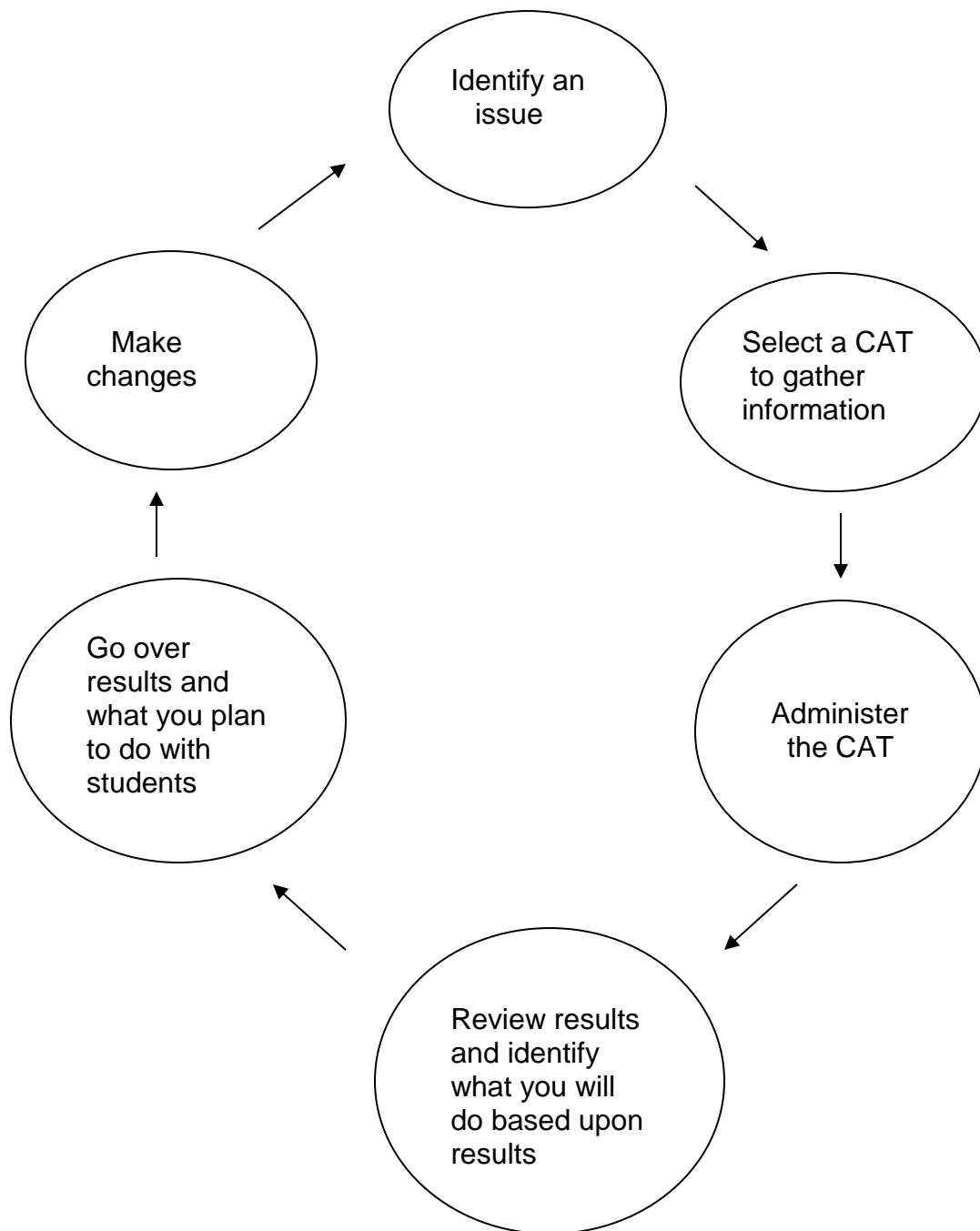
Guidelines for Using Classroom Assessment Successfully

- Pick **one** objective/goal to work on. The Teaching Goals Inventory (from Cross and Angelo's Classroom Assessment Techniques, Jossey-Bass, 1993) may help here. Or, perhaps there is a particular aspect of a course or particular class that is bothering you.
- Focus on an area of your teaching where **you want feedback**.
- Work on something you are **willing to change**, based upon student feedback.
- Work on **one thing at a time**.
- Decide how much time you will allocate to this project. **Set limits**.
- **Ask for help** from colleagues and faculty developers. Be a collaborative learner!
- Tell students **what** you are doing and **why**.
- Students generally do not know how to give specific, constructive feedback. Teach them how to do this first. Expect the first effort from a class to include many vague comments. **Be positive** and show students examples of clear and unclear statements.
- Compile and analyze results **right after** you gather them. It is very easy to put this part off, but absolutely necessary if you are going to follow through.
- **Provide feedback to students** within a week -- involve them as much as possible. Regularly discuss your project with a colleague.
- Change the way you collect data if you find you are not getting useful information. **Be flexible**.
- Make changes **during** the course, and ask students for feedback on the changes.
- **Document** the original findings and changes in a teaching journal.

Classroom Assessment Cycle – Basic

- ✓ **Identify an issue**
- ✓ **Select/devise a Classroom Assessment Technique to gather information from students**
- ✓ **Administer the CAT**
- ✓ **Review results and identify what actions you will take based upon feedback**
- ✓ **Discuss their input and what you are using it for with students**
- ✓ **Make the changes**
- ✓ **Check back with students to see if the changes are making a difference**

Basic Classroom Assessment Cycle



Classroom Assessment Cycle - Expanded

- ✓ Select a goal/objective to work on, and the class you plan to work with.
- ✓ Pick a classroom assessment form to use, or develop a form of your own.
- ✓ Talk to a respected colleague about your goal, your choice of class, and your classroom assessment form. Get their honest and direct advice!
- ✓ Talk with your class about your project, make them feel involved.
- ✓ Administer the classroom assessment form to your class. Compile and analyze the results.
- ✓ Look at the results, and, if the results are not clear, ask that respected colleague for input.
- ✓ Within a week, share the results with students, along with your responses.
- ✓ Follow up by changing your instruction in response to your findings. Administer another classroom assessment form to see if the changes have addressed the problem(s) as intended.
- ✓ Make sure to change your notes on the class to reflect the changes you have made.
- ✓ Continue the cycle with either the same goal, or another one.
- ✓ Share your results with others. Frequently, once we start talking about teaching, we discover that many of us face the same challenges. Your ideas may help another faculty member, and lead to significant discussions about teaching and learning.

Gathering Feedback from Students

Classroom assessment forms are ideal ways to gather information from students -- easy to fill out, quick to tabulate, and specific to **your** students in **your** classes. These ideas can help keep your project time-sensitive and useful to both you and your students.

- Make certain that your students can give you **useful comments**. Don't ask for a level of analysis that your students are unlikely to possess.
- Make sure that you can conceive how knowing the answer to the questions you are asking will **help you improve student learning**.
- Make certain students know you want their **honest, constructive feedback**.
- Emphasize that feedback is **anonymous**. Have a student collect the forms if you suspect that trust might be a significant issue.
- Compile student responses **as soon as possible**.
- Share a summary** of the class responses with students.
- Discuss** points that at least several students seemed to agree upon.
- Do not hesitate to **ask students to clarify or elaborate** upon responses that are unclear to you. If you do this, make sure to emphasize that you want all students to participate in the discussion, since you are not interested in having anyone identify that she/he actually wrote the particular response.
- Treat all responses with **respect**.
- Discuss what you plan **to do** with their responses. If there are ideas that you feel simply do not fit with your teaching goals and style, say so.
- Thank students** for their help.
- Make changes** in your teaching and ask students for more feedback.

Providing Helpful Feedback

To be useful, feedback needs to be clear and easy to understand. This is difficult even when we are talking with someone, when we can see the other person's facial expressions, and that person can ask questions. When we are writing something it is especially important to be very clear because the reader has only our written words.

So, what can we do about this?

Follow these guidelines when providing feedback:

- Write only about yourself, do not try to speak for the entire class, your work group, or anyone but yourself. Use “I” in your responses.
- Be very specific. For example, the comment “your lectures are sometimes boring” is not very helpful, because when do you find them boring? Try “I get bored with your lectures when you give a lot of examples to illustrate your point.” Or, “I get bored with your lectures when you are giving theory, instead of telling us what happens in the real world.”
- Concentrate on things that can be changed. Telling an instructor that the classroom ceiling is too high is not as useful as commenting that the lights reflect upon the screen at the front of the room, making it hard to view.
- When you provide general statements, this can be difficult for the reader to deal with. Words such as “never,” or “always,” are usually too general. Provide a specific situation, and try to use a recent one.
- If asked how well you understand something, or what questions you have, remember the advice to be specific above. Can we emphasize this enough?
- Answer the question asked, not what you also wish to comment upon. If you have something to discuss with the instructor, schedule a time outside of class to have that discussion.
- Remember, the instructor is also a human. “You are a lousy teacher,” even if you explain specific points will probably not produce the result you wish. Concentrate on one behavior you would like to see changed.
- If you are discussing yourself as a student, the same holds true. Saying, “I am just a lousy student, so I do lousy on tests” will not help you analyze what you did wrong on the test or give your instructor anything to help you with.

Anonymity? Perhaps Not Always

While most often we want students to be anonymous when responding, that may not always be the case. Sometimes it may be useful for students to be anonymous to the instructor, yet be able to get their own feedback papers back, perhaps with some comments from the instructor. For example, an instructor may wish to have students retain their feedback forms to compare answers over time during the semester, again after the instructor has reviewed them each time.

How can we maintain a level of anonymity, yet allow students to get their own material back?

A personal identification code (yet another one!)

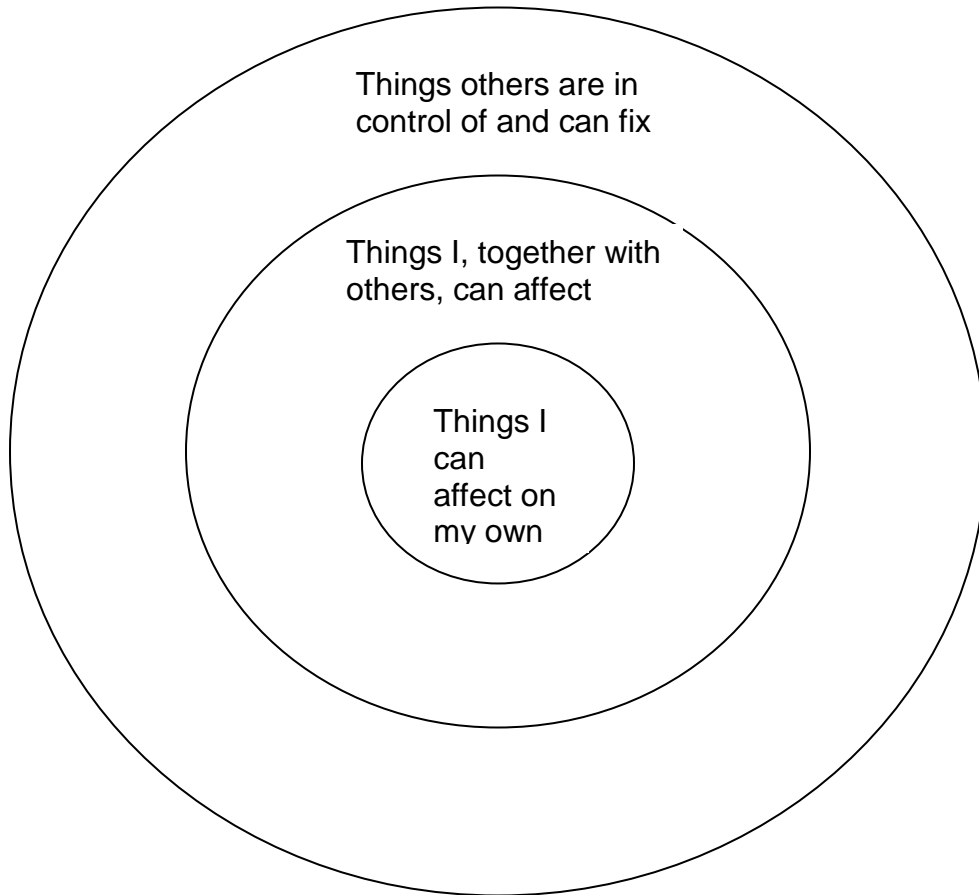
Selecting one is not hard, and should not require the instructor to do anything. Make sure it meets these criteria:

- ✓ Six digits long, including at least two letters, and at least two numbers
- ✓ Not the college id, or any other id or password
- ✓ Avoid starting or ending with AA, ZZ, 1234 – the simple things many people may choose, because then there may be duplicates

Have students write it in class notebook, or something that will always be in class (no need to be especially secretive because it only pertains to feedback in class).

Using a PIC allows instructors to put comments on individual papers for feedback, without knowing which student actually wrote the comment. It also allows students to pick up their own feedback sheets for future use and reference.

Whose Problem Is It?



After determining an issue in your class, apply this model to determine if it is an issue you alone can affect, or redefine the issue to the part you can affect.

Classroom Assessment - Brief Planning Guide

What is the issue I want feedback on (only one!):

CAT I will use (or adapt):

What class or classes will I do this with (some are appropriate to do more than once, and students frequently get better at providing feedback with practice):

I will give students ____ minutes to do this (practice on yourself – how long does it take you to fill it out, and then add 50% more time for students)

I will introduce this CAT to students by mentioning:

I will give myself how much time to review results and report back to students:

If I get stumped, who will I ask for help?

Classroom Assessment Project Packet

Note: This packet that may be used in conjunction with a workshop, placed online for easy access by faculty, or used on its own as a classroom assessment project planning tool. It assumes that the individual has completed a Teaching Goals Inventory (TGI) or similar activity in order to start with a single goal. A report like this may be just what you need to get administrative support to provide stipends for faculty who do classroom assessment. For courses taught by multiple faculty members, it is often useful to have each fill out a TGI and then schedule time for them to discuss answers and arrive at a consensus.

Name:

Classroom Assessment Project Packet

Teaching Goal:

Class:

1. In relation to the goal you have selected, please answer **one** of the following questions (whichever one seems to generate the most interesting thoughts to you!).

One problem my students have that I want to work on is . . .

Something I'd like to gather some student feedback on is . . .

Something I'm not sure about is . . .

2. **Ideally**, the information I collect will tell me . . .

Quick question — is the information you want to collect able to be provided by the level student you have in this course? (This is not a comment on our students. It does mean that few students have experience providing constructive feedback to instructors and some sorts of analysis are beyond the sophistication of introductory students.)

3. List some ***specific*** class activities, homework assignments, lab/clinical/work/tutoring activities, or methods of evaluation, etc. that relate directly to your answer to question 1 on the previous page (feel free to continue on the back if necessary):

4. A classroom assessment form I can use is (list specific form name) or questions of my own that I plan to ask are . . .

5. The process I will use to administer this feedback form.

Class I will use this feedback form in is:

Number of students probably providing feedback:

I will introduce this classroom assessment process by . . .

Time(s) during the course when I will pass this out ...

Method(s) I will use to compile the results . . .

Ways I will share the results with students . . .

6. Questions/problems/concerns I have about this whole process . . .

7. Ways a colleague can help me with this process . . .

Project Notes

Use this page to summarize: a) class notes on how well you thought the teaching/ learning activities listed actually went; b) the feedback received from students (attach sample copies or if you compile the results, include the compilation); c) discussions with colleagues; d) personal notes.

Future Plans

Please use this page to describe plans for adjusting activities in future classes. It is most useful if you are as specific as possible about what you are changing based upon student feedback. You may also wish to determine how you will know that the changes are effective (a new classroom assessment device, or possibly continuing to use what you did for this project?).

Sample Goal and Activities

Goal: *Improve writing skills*

Specific class activities/homework assignments/ methods of evaluation/etc. that relate directly to this goal:

More than two full letter grades taken off for spelling/style/grammar

I explain why writing is so important today and in future

I discuss how writing and thinking are linked

There are in-class, informal writings each week

At least nine short papers are due during the course

One long paper due at the end of the course

I use dots for "odd" spelling, sentence structure, etc., with offer to explain them in a conference

Bring in examples of my own writing

Classroom Assessment Forms

Note: Following are CATs on a wide variety of subjects that can easily be used, adapted, or customized to fit the particular needs of a faculty member in a particular course. These forms are organized by major topic. However, if you decide to put them up on a teaching/learning website (a great idea!), you may wish to have some faculty members work together to further refine the topics to make it easier for a faculty member searching for something to find it with less browsing.

A Question I Have

Based upon what we covered in class today, is there a question that you still have that I need to cover in the next class? Be as specific as you can be, so that I am sure what you are writing about. Please do not put your name on this sheet; this is feedback for me, not a quiz! Thanks!

Class Feedback

Please do not put your name on this paper. This is feedback for me, not a quiz!
Thanks for your help.

The key idea we covered in this class was (please both list the idea and explain what you believe it means) . . .

One new idea I gathered from this class was (again, please both list the idea and explain what you believe it means) . . .

One important question I have that relates to class today is . . .

Confidence Levels

At this point in the course, we have covered many difficult topics. I need feedback from you concerning which topics you feel most comfortable with. **This is not a quiz, and I am not going to use your answers to develop tests or quizzes.** What I am going to do is to use the class responses to help me develop classroom activities over the next few weeks. That is, I will do more with subjects that most students do not feel comfortable with. Also, if you do not feel comfortable with a subject, please do come to see me during my office hours. I am happy to meet with you.

I will identify five different topics. Please use the following scale as you answer.

- 1 = I can easily explain this concept to someone else
- 2 = I am quite sure I can explain this concept to someone else
- 3 = I can explain parts of this concept, but probably not everything
- 4 = I am quite sure I cannot explain this concept to someone else
- 5 = I cannot explain this concept to someone else

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Lecture Outline

I am interested in feedback on my teaching, particularly the lectures in this class. Of course I need your help (anonymous help -- **do not put your name on this**). Please use your class notes to produce an outline of the main subjects that I covered today. Remember, there is no right or wrong outline -- I am only interested in feedback on my teaching.

What's Exciting To Me?

At this point in the course, I need some feedback from you. I know what I feel are the most exciting parts of this subject, but am I showing you? Please list and *briefly explain* what you believe I think are the most exciting subjects we've studied so far. **Do not put your name on this form.**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Focused Listing

I need you to help me understand what is clear to you, and what is still unclear. Please **do not** put your name on this paper. This isn't a test! I will give you a topic, and I want you to list 5 words or phrases that define and describe this topic to you.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Applications

Please describe three specific ways that you feel you can use some idea (or ideas) that we discussed today. Write enough about each situation so that I can understand what you mean. Thanks.

1.

2.

3.

Guiding Principles

At this point in the course, I need some feedback from you to see how well I am identifying the key concepts in our field. Please do not put your name on this and answer as directly as you can. This is not a test. I will use the class responses to see what areas I need to emphasize over the next few weeks.

Please identify and **briefly** explain what you consider to be the five key concepts we have studied so far. Thanks for your help.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Test Feedback - Student

Please fill out this form before the next class. Please hand it in at the beginning of class, after I have graded your test (so your comments cannot possibly affect your grade) and before you know your grade. You and I will use this information to help you make your study time for the next test as effective as possible. Thanks!

The questions that I felt **very confident of** were (be as specific as possible about which ones) . . .

The questions that I felt **very weak on** were (again, be very specific) . . .

I expect my grade to be about (A, B, C, D, or F) . . .

To maximize my grade on the next test, I need to (be specific - do you need to get to every class, or join a study group, or copy your class notes over after class, or take more notes on the reading, or . . .)

I need you, the instructor, to do this to help me . . .

Teaching Feedback

Please do not put your name on this paper. I am interested only in feedback from the class. Thanks in advance for helping me improve my teaching!

One thing that you (the instructor) do that helps my learning is . . .

One thing that you do that interferes with my learning is . . .

A practical suggestion I have that will improve the class for me is . . .

Most Useful - Least Useful

Please do not put your name on this paper. I am interested only in making my teaching as effective as possible. In making your comments below, please be as specific as you possibly can. Thanks!

The **most useful** part of this class was . . .

The **least useful** part of this class was . . .

One thing you could do to make the class more useful is . . .

Objective Checking

At this point in the course, I need your feedback on how you feel we are doing in achieving our objectives for the course. Please look through the objectives I have listed on the syllabus and let me know what ones you feel we are definitely working toward. After that, list the ones you are not sure we are covering. Please do not put your name on this form; it is not a quiz!

Objectives I feel that we **are definitely working toward** include . . .

Objectives I am **unsure we are working toward** include . . .

Are We Meeting Expectations?

Please do not put your name on this paper. I need your honest feedback to see if you believe that this course is meeting the expectations we discussed at the beginning of the course.

An expectation I had about this course that **is being met** so far is . . .

An expectation I had about this course that I **don't feel is being met** so far is . . .

An expectation I had about this course that I am **not sure is being met** so far is . . .

Background Knowledge Probe

Please take a few minutes and explain any experience or knowledge you have about what you believe we will be discussing in this course. Have you ever taken any courses where you think some subject matter will overlap with this course? Do you have any work experience that you think may be relevant? Have you ever read something, or taken a training program, or studied on your own some subject(s) that you think we will be covering?

I need this information so that I can take full advantage of the knowledge that different members of the class have (and, also so I don't bore everyone with information you all already know!).

Course Objectives

It is important to me to find out what your objectives for this course are. Please do not put your name on this paper; I am only interested in the class as a whole.

Please list four or five objectives you hope to achieve by attending this course.

YOU'RE OBJECTIVES FOR THIS COURSE	RANKING
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Now, rank your objectives in order of their importance. Your most important objective receives a ranking of 1. The next most important gets a 2, etc.

After I present my objectives for this course, please put a (+) before each of your objectives that is close to one of mine. Place a (-) before each of your objectives that is not close to one of mine.

Expectations

Both in courses and at work, it is very important to be clear about the expectations we have of each other. Often we have ideas about what a person should do (or not do) or how that person should talk (or what she or he should not say), that we do not tell them. Later, I will discuss my expectations of your behavior as college students, but, right now I need you to write out how you expect me to behave. What do you expect me to do in class? What do you expect me to say, or not say? Be as specific as possible, and please **do not put your name on this form**. I am interested in ideas from the class.

What To Review?

We have to decide what topics to review prior to the test. Now, I could just pick some and hope that they were the ones that people wished to spend time on. I am not going to do that. Instead, I am going to ask you all to vote. As I identify the key topics, please think about whether that topic is something you really want to review. When I have identified them all, please jot down the **top five** you wish to review and write them below.

The top five topics I hope we review before the test are:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Course Web Site

I need some feedback from you about the web site for this course. Please do not put your name on this, as it is only feedback for me to use to improve the web site.

Please use the following key when answering the statements below:

- 1 = Completely agree
- 2 = Agree, but not strongly
- 3 = No opinion one way or the other
- 4 = Disagree, but not strongly
- 5 = Completely disagree

- I go to the web site at least once a week.
- I find the course web site very useful.
- I use the web site to make certain I have the assignments right.
- I find the supplementary materials for each week very helpful.
- I find the review materials for tests to be very helpful.
- I have used the links to search for more information on subjects that interest me.
- The course web site has helped me get a better grade in this course.
- Compared to other course web sites at this college, this one is at least as good.

The biggest thing I like about the course web site is

One thing I would like to see improved is

Feedforward

Feedforward? Yes, I need some information from you before we even start! Please do not put your name on this, as all I am trying to do is to collect some information in order to be able to teach you more effectively. Thanks for your help!

Do you consider yourself to have much **knowledge** about the subject of this course?

No matter what level of knowledge you have, do you have some **experience** (or experiences) that you feel may be relevant to what we are going to study? Please explain them briefly.

Do you have a **key question, or problem** that you hope this course will deal with (well, related to the subject of the course – we all have questions!)? What is it?

What is the **best thing** that can happen to you in this course (other than a grade)?

Is there something you hope I do **not do** during class?