

Step I: Understand the Learning Context

The first step in planning a student assessment is to understand the overall learning context.

- **Course characteristics:**
 - Identify characteristics of the course which includes the difficulty level for students, required prerequisites, the discipline of the content, constraints of teaching the course (e.g. quality and quantity of course content, time, resources, etc.) and the relationship of your course to other courses in the department.
- **Student characteristics:**
 - Document the reasons why students are taking the course, demographics, and students expectations.
- **Classroom characteristics:**
 - Consider the characteristics of the classroom, such as: what technological resources will be available, will you have a graduate assistant, what is the design of the classroom, and other classroom features.

Use Worksheet A (below) to document the learning context.

- Record course, student, and classroom characteristics to help you formulate your course objectives and identify the purpose and uses of your assessment.
- It may be necessary to informally survey students to complete the *Student Characteristics* portion of the form.
- You can also use Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) during the first week of the term to gather information about the students enrolled in your course.

Worksheet A: Describe Your Learning Context

Course Characteristics

Course title:

Enrollment:

Teaching Constraints:

Required for major/degree plan? Yes No Identify:

Is the course Upper or Lower Division?

Is the course part of a sequence? Yes No Related courses:

Instructional resources available:

Student Characteristics

% Majors:

% Freshmen: Sophomores: Juniors: Seniors: Graduate:

% International:

Top 5 reasons students take the course:

Student expectations for course:

Classroom Characteristics

Teaching Assistant tasks (if applicable):

Seating capacity:

Seating configuration:

Available technology:

Other: