

Muddiest Point Assessment

The concept of the Muddiest Point arose when Harvard's Professor Mosteller, after 42 years of distinguished teaching in statistics, figured that no matter how polished they seemed, some classroom explanations could still be improved. So he asked his students to write down what was *least* clear to them. Actually, asking students to identify that which is least understood is an interesting and potentially powerful integrative exercise because it requires students, first, to rate their own understanding across several topics and, second, to ponder, if ever momentarily, *why* one particular topic should be selected as *least* understood.

The Muddiest Point assessment should be used with discretion. Focusing on muddiest points too often can be discouraging for both students and professors because of the tendency to emphasize the negative.

Professors can collect and scan perhaps 100 Muddiest Points in 15 minutes. If 25% of the class mentions the same Muddiest Point, the professor might want to schedule added class time on the subject. At a 20% threshold, the professor might do a review session outside of class or have a tutorial session. At a 15% level, the professor might distribute an explanatory handout.

Source: T.A. Angelo and K.P. Cross, 1993. *Classroom Assessment Techniques*, 2nd. Ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass., p. 154-8.

Sample Form: The Muddiest Point

What has been the "muddiest" point so far in this session? That is, what topic remains the least clear to you?
