

Master Teacher Program: Project Guidelines

Classroom Research Project

The capstone experience of the USMA Master Teacher Program is a Classroom Research Project and paper. According to Pat Cross, Classroom Research is "the careful, systematic, and patient study of students in the process of learning, and more specifically of how students are responding to our efforts to teach them. The task for Classroom Research is not so much to study learning in general, as to study learning in particular as it takes place -- or fails to -- for your students, in your classroom, and in your subject matter, with your particular teaching skills and preferences."

The characteristics of Classroom Research define it – at its core, it is learner-centered, teacher-directed, and context-specific. You're going to assess an issue that matters to the learning of your students, based on what you see in your classroom and your course.

The process:

- (1) Pick a focus. Think about your classroom – how do you interact with cadets, what classroom activities predominate, why did you choose them, through what activities does learning occur, and where could you use a little improvement? Brainstorm the issues that you tend to think about. What activity(s) would you like to focus on for classroom research?
- (2) Survey the literature to see what other teachers have done with that topic. What strategies have they used; what conclusions have they drawn? You will better formulate your own plan, and possibly branch into a new area you've just discovered as a result of your literature search.
- (3) Develop a plan. How can you look at the issue? Can you try a new strategy with each new unit, and then compare at the end of the semester? Maybe develop five or six small group activities, conduct one per lesson, and then assess them at the end of two weeks? How will you assess the outcomes? There are obvious indicators – grades on projects, homework, and exams. You can look at student participation and interaction, tracking how often and how well your students speak up. You can ask your department peers to observe a few classes and provide feedback about how they think your new technique worked. You can – and should – also ask your students, using surveys or minute papers. After you've tried something new, ask them to assess what they liked and didn't like about it. Refer to Angelo and Cross (1993) for more classroom assessment techniques.
- (4) Analyze your information. You've gathered grades, surveyed your students, and made notes after every class. What does all of the information add up to? You might use statistical techniques, but you might also look at the information in a holistic and qualitative manner – what patterns do you see?
- (5) Report the information. Write it up for your MTP project, and potentially to submit it to a journal or academic conference.

Literature Review Project

Participants also have the option of conducting and writing a literature review addressing a teaching and learning topic, in lieu of the research project. Literature reviews should focus on a specific topic area within teaching and learning, and may potentially be submitted for inclusion in the POD/NTLF TEACHING & LEARNING ONLINE RESOURCE CENTER. To that extent, literature reviews should follow a specific format, and topics should be approved by Dr. Evans.

The POD/NTLF Format:

- Topic, Author Information
- Topic Overview -- 500-1,500 words short essay describing key issues, history of practice, practice variations, beneficial attributes, controversial aspects
- An annotated bibliography of the most influential, current, and useful resources, 50-150 words per resource (no more than 10-12 items)
- Additional Resources --- Citations of additional print, web, or video resources, without annotation.

Sample literature reviews, a writing template, and a list of suggested topics, are available on Blackboard.

Useful texts:

Angelo, T.A., & Cross, P.K. (1993). Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers, 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cross, K.P & Steadman, M.H. (1996). Classroom research: Implementing the scholarship of teaching. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Useful websites:

<http://www.dean.usma.edu/centers/cte/>

<http://www.evergreen.edu/washcenter/resources/acl/c1.html>

<http://www.accessexcellence.org/LC/TL/AR/>

<http://www.prodait.org/research/index.php>

Keyword List – use to stimulate ideas on what you might investigate for your classroom research.

Active Learning	Classroom Participation	Cooperative Learning	Case Studies
Discovery Learning	Experiential Learning	Problem-Based Learning	Questioning Techniques
Student Presentations	Advising	Assessment of Learning	Methods
Cheating	Grading	Testing Formats	Assessment of Teaching
Classroom Observations	Lesson Planning	Teaching Portfolios	Course Development
Course Goals and Objectives	Student Course Evaluations	Distance Education	Critical Thinking
Cognitive Mapping	Intellectual Development	Problem Solving Skills	Ethics in Teaching
Evaluation of Teaching	Student Evaluations	Peer Reviews	Teaching Portfolios
Humor in Teaching	Interdisciplinary Teaching	Team Teaching	Instructional Technology
First Class Meeting	Electronic Media	Films and Videotapes	Laboratory Instruction
Mentoring Junior Faculty Members	Writing Across the Curriculum	Psychological Foundations of Teaching and Learning	Student Motivation
Learning Styles	Teaching Styles	Student Epistemology	Teacher Epistemology
Teaching Strategies	Lecturing	Debates	Demonstrations
Discussions	Games and Role Playing	Independent Study	Seminars
Simulations	Student Projects	Study Groups	Studio Instruction
Tutoring	Written Assignments	Philosophies of Teaching	Texts and Readings
Course Packs	Handouts	Individual Consultations	Group Consultations
Evaluation of Teaching	Student Evaluations	Peer Reviews	Teaching Portfolios
Classroom Observations	Learning Styles	Podcasting	Blogs
	Computer Assisted Instruction		