

Guidelines on Assessing Class Participation

Student participation in class is a form of active learning that develops skills in critical thinking, oral and written communication, listening, appreciation of cultural differences, teamwork and time management. Assessing class participation facilitates student attainment of such skills.

Effective learning requires interaction between the student, the lecturer/tutor, and other students. The greatest learning value will result from good student preparation, more focused questions and discussions. In addition, reflecting on what has been learned is an important process for students to enable them to confidently apply newly acquired learned skills.

When class participation is used as a method of assessment, the unit description must clearly identify the unit learning outcomes assessed, and the marking guide/rubric for participation must indicate how the marks awarded will reflect the level of student attainment. Example rubrics are given in Appendix 1.

Assessing class participation as a component of the overall assessment has several benefits. These include:

- Assessing student attainment of unit and course learning outcomes related to skills such as critical analysis, communication, teamwork, and cultural and global awareness;
- Providing opportunities for students to articulate their ideas, build shared understandings, engage with content, and to contribute to a dynamic learning environment;
- Providing tutors with a means of acknowledging students' contributions;
- Providing incentive for students to actively participate in class discussions, and by doing so, improve their oral communication skills;
- Encouraging students to prepare for classes and engage with course readings and materials.

Class participation and their assessment can take various forms including:

- Quizzes on readings and learning material;
- Exercises or quizzes at the end of laboratory sessions to assess laboratory participation and understanding;
- Reflective journals or self-assessment of contributions to learning activities;
- Discussion on readings and assessing contributions to discussion;
- Journal or blog entries identifying and analysing the key arguments from the readings or learning materials;
- Attending and engaging with fellow students and the teacher in discussing topics during lectures and tutorials;

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Original Issue:

23 March 2020

Drafted by Heads of Schools

12 March 2020

Revised and Approved by the Executive Dean (ED) & Chair T&L:

19 March 2020

Current version

19 March 2020

Review Date:

23 March 2021



- Group discussions, debates, or problem-solving exercises in small groups during tutorials, laboratories or lectures;
- Peer-assessment of group members' contributions;
- Constructive commentary on blog posts submitted by class members;
- Peer review (with guidelines for how to do it) of class participation;
- Monitoring of who contributed; who asked relevant questions; who responded to peers' contributions and quality of the contributions during classes;
- Assessing contributions to online discussion boards, chats and other online learning forums;
- Assessment of students' competence when requested to prepare presentations and lead discussions;
- Oral presentations;
- Listening and reflecting back on lectures or presentations.

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Appendix 1. Example Rubrics for Assessment of Class Participation

Two examples are given here, one for in-class participation and the other for on-line discussion board participation. The rubrics may need to be adapted for the units offered, depending on the learning outcomes assessed and the mode of student participation.

In-Class Participation Example

	High Distinction (80% - 100%)	Distinction (70% - 79%)	Credit (60% - 69%)	Pass (50% - 59%)	Fail (<50%)
Quality of student contribution	Student contribution is always completely relevant to the topic, is highly constructive and thoughtful, uses correct terminology and provides new insights into the topic.	Student contribution is highly relevant to the topic, is mostly constructive and thoughtful with only minor lapses, and uses correct terminology.	Student input is relevant to the topic, shows some evidence of constructive and thoughtful contributions and uses correct terminology.	Student input is relevant to the topic and adds value to the discussions, but lacks thoughtfulness and has inadequacy in the use of terminology.	Student input is not relevant to the topic or does not add value to the discussions.
Frequency of participation	Student participates in 80% or more of the in-class sessions.	Student participates between 70% and less than 80% of the sessions.	Student participates between 60% and less than 70% of the sessions.	Student participates in between 50% and less than 60% of the sessions.	Student participates in less than 50% of the sessions.

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<p>Understanding and evaluating contributions of fellow students</p>	<p>Student listens with no distractions when fellow students speak and demonstrates excellent level of understanding of others' contributions by asking highly relevant questions and making highly thoughtful observations¹.</p>	<p>Student listens with few distractions when fellow students speak and demonstrates good level of understanding of their contributions by asking questions that are related but may not be highly relevant, and/or making thoughtful observations.</p>	<p>Student listens with some interruptions or distractions when fellow students speak and demonstrates acceptable level of understanding of their contributions by asking questions or making related observations.</p>	<p>Student shows evidence of listening when fellow students speak and shows some, but not thorough, understanding of their contributions through responses.</p>	<p>Student does not listen to fellow students when they speak, or student listens but does not demonstrate understanding of their contributions.</p>
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¹ In order to manage time (and to avoid a few students dominating classroom discussions), the lecturer may plan ahead and pre-allocate to each student sessions where they would be expected to ask questions on fellow students' contributions

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On-line Discussion Board Participation

	High Distinction (80% - 100%)	Distinction (70% - 79%)	Credit (60% - 69%)	Pass (50% - 59%)	Fail (<50%)
Quality of student contribution	Student contribution is always completely relevant to the topic, is highly constructive and thoughtful, uses correct terminology and provides new insights into the topic.	Student contribution is highly relevant to the topic, is mostly constructive and thoughtful with only minor lapses, and uses correct terminology.	Student input is relevant to the topic, shows some evidence of constructive and thoughtful contributions and uses correct terminology.	Student input is relevant to the topic and adds value to the discussions but lacks thoughtfulness and has inadequacy in the use of terminology.	Student input is not relevant to the topic or does not add value to the discussions.
Frequency of participation	Student posts on the discussion board their contributions every week or at a minimum, 80% of the study weeks.	Student posts on the discussion board their contributions between 70% and less than 80% of the study weeks.	Student posts on the discussion board their contributions between 60% and less than 70% of the study weeks.	Student posts on the discussion board their contributions between 50% and less than 70% of the study weeks.	Student posts their contributions on the discussion board less than half of the weeks of the trimester.
Understanding of contributions	Student demonstrates high level of understanding of other	Student demonstrates good level of understanding of fellow	Student demonstrates some understanding of fellow students'	Student post responses to fellow students' posts which are related to the	Student does not demonstrate

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of fellow students	students' contributions to the discussion board by posting highly relevant follow-up questions and/or making highly thoughtful and constructive observations regularly.	students' contributions to the discussion board by regularly making relevant follow-up posts that are thoughtful and constructive.	contributions through asking questions and/or making follow-up posts which are relevant but with inadequacies in being thoughtful and constructive.	topic but lack demonstration of good levels of understanding and thoughtfulness.	reading of fellow students' contributions or makes follow up posts that are not relevant or lacks understanding.
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