

Expectations for Class Participation

Why should you participate in class discussions?

Active participation in class discussions helps you master skills such as analyzing, summarizing, evaluating, supporting opinion and developing logical arguments.

Meetings are the single largest component of managers' time. At the upper echelons of management, executives want their colleagues to be able to effectively contribute a point of view. Thus, participation skills are among those most highly prized among executives. If you can improve these skills, you improve your managerial career prospects.

Active involvement in learning increases what is remembered, how well it is assimilated, and how the learning is used in new situations. To express opinions to peers about your own thoughts, you must articulate those thoughts and also submit them to (hopefully constructive) examination by others. In listening to peers, you hear many different ways of interpreting and applying class material, and thus are able to integrate many examples of how to use the information. Especially in a course that stresses application of material, extensive participation in class discussions is an essential element of your learning.

What class participation behaviors do we strive to encourage?

In management classes, we teach that the best ways to evaluate job performance is to develop behavioral indicators of good performance specific for a given job. Behavioral indicators can be evaluated much more objectively than, say, characteristics or traits (e.g., positive outlook, enthusiasm, commitment). Furthermore, they can be assessed at frequent intervals, unlike final output that can only be assessed irregularly. Accordingly, I use a set of behavioral indicators of good class participation. The highest score ("4" on a 4-point scale) is then assigned to the behaviors that are indicators of excellent participation, a score of "3" (equivalent to "B") is assigned to the behaviors we expect on average from most of you in order for the class to meet its learning objectives. Scores of "2" and below are assigned to behavioral indicators of less than satisfactory participation. The scale is based on Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives to provide guidelines for developing the criteria. The criteria for "4" always include synthesis and evaluation (Bloom's highest levels of learning objectives).

Evaluation of Case preparation:

- (1) Points should be relevant to the discussion in terms of increasing everyone's understanding, rather than merely regurgitation of case facts.
- (2) Points should not be isolated and disjointed, but rather should take into consideration the ideas offered by others earlier in the class. The best contributions following the lead off tend to be those that reflect not only excellent preparation, but good listening, and interpretative and integrative skills as well.

(3) Comments should show evidence of solid comprehension and analysis of the case material

(4) Participants should distinguish among different kinds of data-- facts, opinions, assumptions, and inferences

(5) Participants should be willing to test new ideas and to interact with other class members by asking questions or challenging conclusions, rather than just providing cautious, "safe" comments.

Evaluation criteria focus on what you demonstrate and do not presume to guess at what you know but do not demonstrate. What you offer to the class is what you and others learn from. I expect the average level of participation to satisfy the criteria for a "3".

| Grade/ Level | Criteria |
|----------------------------|---|
| 0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absent or Disruptive |
| 1. infrequent involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present, not disruptive Tries to respond when called on but does not offer much |
| 2. sporadic involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates adequate preparation: knows basic case or reading facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret or analyze them Offers straightforward information (e.g., straight from the case or reading), without elaboration Does not offer to contribute to discussion, but contributes to a moderate degree when called on |
| 3. active involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates preparation: knows case or reading facts well, has thought through implications of them Offers interpretations and analysis of case material (more than just facts) to class Contributes to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion |
| 4. outstanding involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed readings well, relating it to experiences and other material (e.g., news or prior course readings, material and discussions) Offers analysis, synthesis and evaluation of case material, e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further Contributes in a significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to the cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc... |