Strategy: Grading Student Participation

Because research shows both benefits from and limitations for grading participation, it is important to consider various options for doing so.

Origin


Application

Use a Participation Rubric.

- Create the rubric.
  1. Explicitly state goals in the first column of the rubric.
  2. List the “things you are looking for” or criteria for each of the goals.
  3. Create the rating scale for each of the performance levels.
  4. Test the rubric against the learning goals of the assignment to be sure nothing is missing.
- Discuss the rubric with students.
- Consider allowing students to assess themselves using the rubric.
- Rubrics may consider positive attributes (Enters into class discussion, Offers questions or comments during class, Visits podium after class, Visits office hours to clarify ideas, Engages in online discussions, Offers questions or comments via email) and negative attributes (Skips class, Comes late to class, Sleeps in class, Exhibits disruptive behavior).

Ask students to grade themselves rhetorically.

- At predetermined points throughout the semester, have students write a one-page essay to:
  1. Propose what grade they deserve for class participation thus far
  2. Defend their proposed grade with evidence from the classroom.
- Be prepared to provide feedback for students, especially those whose perceptions of their participation vary greatly from yours.

Use Reflective Response (RR).

- Give students 10 minutes of unannounced, free writing time on a prompt that fits the course content. Doing this throughout the semester at unannounced times can measure attendance and participation.
Use a Participation Log.
- Have students grade themselves weekly or daily using criteria that you provide (similar to a rubric but using letter grades).
- Have students use these frequent grades to assign themselves a midterm and/or final grade.
- Have students write a 2 to 3 page paper explaining their grade.

Use a rubric and log weekly to have students assess themselves.
- Have students grade their participation weekly using a rubric and also write a short justification for their score.
- Provide feedback based on student responses.

Sample Participation Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full participation as a leader in class and on the blogs asking quality questions, providing well-developed responses, and sharing knowledge with others. Demonstrates “big picture thinking” tying course concepts to class, experiences, and discipline.</td>
<td>Above average participation as mostly a listener with some involvement in class and on the blog. Some questions and responses provided. Not always able to describe how concepts tie together in terms of the “big picture.”</td>
<td>Does what is expected: comes to class and completes assignments. Normally a listener in a group discussion. Often does not ask or answer questions. Sometimes distracted and not motivated to see the “big picture.”</td>
<td>Does not demonstrate a time commitment to the course (does not attend). Often does not participate, even when a group requests participation. Not interested in how course concepts relate to the “big picture.”</td>
<td>Acts in a manner that disrupts the learning of self and others. Creates an uncomfortable environment for others. (Disrespect, incivility, etc.)</td>
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</tbody>
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Reflection

- How does this compare to what you are already doing?

- Why is it (or isn’t it) important to grade student participation?

- What are the goals for student participation in your course? How do you measure these goals?