

Context: This is a participation rubric used in synchronous online graduate level Public Administration courses (Leadership Ethics and Organization Theory). It provides the rationale for grading class participation in these courses, details the expectations for both quantity and quality of students' contributions to the discussion during the synchronous session, the corresponding grading scale, and the expectations/grading scale for making up absences. The document was authored by Richard M. Jacobs, OSA, Ph.D. in the department of Public Administration. Questions about the document can be directed to Stefan A. Perun, Ph.D. in the department of Public Administration, stefan.perun@villanova.edu.

When students inquire about how they might improve the class participation grade, it's important that they understand, first, what "class participation" is.

One of the important aspects of a Master's degree program is getting students to talk in a way that they demonstrate a Master's knowledge, understanding, and ability to integrate materials across courses. And, hopefully, the integration of those ideas makes the discussion not only richer and more in depth but also refines ideas in the students' minds...raises the intellectual tone of the class.

That said, class participation is also preparation for the comprehensive examination. Making those connections now makes preparing for comprehensives easier later. In fact, noting those linkages as students go along---just keeping a file of them as they come up and come to mind---is a very helpful way for students to begin organizing their thoughts for comprehensives.

In the course, class participation is more than being present in the online class, following the material/discussion, taking notes, and the like (e.g., chat notes that don't contribute to the discussion). Those behaviors might be called "passive" forms of class participation, for which students can expect a grade of "C," meaning "present."

"Active" class participation includes those student behaviors that build upon those passive forms of class participation described above. Among others, these active behaviors can include:

- providing evidence of having read the textbooks and viewed the videos (e.g., introducing them into the discussion);
- asking questions about the contents of the textbooks, videos, or worksheets;
- endeavoring to clarify what was not clear or understood about the textbooks, videos, or worksheets;
- offering practical applications (examples) of ideas being discussed;
- offering practical applications (examples) of theories studied; and,
- raising challenges to theories, ideas, and concepts.

Students demonstrate these active behaviors in the online forum through direct involvement (e.g., using the microphone) and indirect involvement (e.g., using the chat box). Students also demonstrate these active behaviors by participating in a scholarly way on the course discussion boards.

When students actively participate in class in these and other similar ways, they can expect a grade of "B" or "B+" ("present and participating"), "A-" ("active participant"), "A" (active contributor).

Sometimes, students think "active" class participation means injecting oneself into the class simply "to be noticed." In fact, that's not class participation---neither active nor passive class participation---but a distraction to the learning process. In the online forum, class time is very limited and because of this, students should expect a grade of "C" ("present") or "D" ("present but a distraction") for any distraction to the online learning process.

As noted on the syllabus, class participation in the course accounts for 20% of the final grade. Using the idea of "active" class participation as the standard of assessment, the professor will assign a grade to each student for each week's session. If a student has a question about one's weekly grade, this student is encouraged to contact the professor to clarify the assessment so as to improve one's weekly grade.

Grading Class Participation:

A student can earn 100 points for class participation weekly. During each class session, the instructor keeps a record of student participation and awards points based on the quantity and quality of each student's participation.

- If a student attends the virtual class, appears attentive, but does not otherwise participate or has not prepared for class, the instructor will award 60 points.

- If a student attends the virtual class, is attentive and participates by using the interactive tools, the instructor will award 70 or 80 points.

- If a student attends the virtual class, is attentive, participates by using the interactive tools, and evidences knowledge, understanding, and application of the materials being considered or questions the materials to know, understand, and apply them better, the instructor will award 90 or 100 points.

Absence from the Virtual Class:

If a student is unable to attend a virtual class due to a professional obligation, the student should inform the instructor beforehand. The student is required to watch the video and must submit a summary of the video with commentary about its comments, as if the student was present in class, prior to the ensuing online class. The student will be assigned 60 points for submitting the summary/commentary.

Depending upon the quality of the summary/commentary, students can be assigned up to 80 points. "Quality" involves more than reportage; among other things, the commentary extends the discussion, locates it in the literature/videos studied, raises unanswered questions (and perhaps answers them), applies the concepts practically to one's workplace, etc.

An unexcused absence will be awarded an "0" for that virtual class session.