

Participation in Class Discussions – Scoring and Examples

Overview

Posted messages should be **significant** – helping the discussion move forward. There are a variety of ways to do this, including (generally in some combination over the course of the week or within a posting):

- Providing concrete examples, perhaps from your own experience
- Describing possible consequences or implications
- Challenging something that has been posted in the discussion – perhaps by playing “devil’s advocate”
- Posing a clarifying question
- Suggesting a different perspective or interpretation
- Pulling in related information from other sources – books, articles, websites, other courses, etc.

Your participation score for a given week will be based on the number and quality of messages you post to that discussion. Participation will be evaluated in terms of quality as well as quantity, based on the following scale:

Criteria	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Exemplary
Quality and Timeliness	0 to 3 points Does not submit at least one initial response early in the session and/or does not submit at least two peer responses closer to the end of the session.	3.25 to 3.75 points Participant timely makes thoughtful comments, contributes occasionally, usually shows interest in and respect for the views of others, and participates relatively actively while usually demonstrating conventional netiquette. This score also might be given to a participant whose contributions are less developed, or less cogent, than a student who receives an “A.”	4 to 5 points Submits one initial response early in the session, and two or more thoughtful peer responses early in the session, and more than two peer responses closer to the end of the session.

Criteria	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Exemplary
Demonstrates knowledge and understanding	0 to 3 points Post(s) and responses show little evidence of knowledge and understanding of course content and applicability to professional practice.	3.25 to 3.75 points Post(s) and responses show evidence of knowledge and understanding of course content and applicability to professional practice.	4 to 5 points Post(s) and responses show evidence of knowledge and understanding of course content and applicability to professional practice, and include other resources that extend the learning of the community.
Moves the discussion forward	0 to 3 points Posts do not attempt to elicit responses and reactions from other learners and/or responses do not build upon the ideas of other learners to take the discussion deeper.	3.25 to 3.75 points Posts attempt to elicit responses and reactions from other learners and responses build upon the ideas of other learners to take the discussion deeper.	4 to 5 points Posts elicit responses and reactions from other learners and responses build upon and integrate multiple views from other learners to take the discussion deeper.
POINTS	0-9	9.75-11.25	12-15

Scoring

9-11 point discussion scores for a particular discussion will be relatively common. 12-15 point discussion scores, however, will be more difficult because of the type and amount of messages required; most of which will require deeper, more critical thought about the content. Also, please understand that this is not an exact science. We will have to make some judgment calls, and the lines between these categories will seem pretty thin at times. The examples that follow will help clarify the categories. The examples are actual posted comments from other courses and semesters.

Examples of un-satisfactory messages: They may indicate agreement or disagreement with a prior message, but they are too general to help move the discussion forward.

Example 1 – *“Good idea for assessing whether people know what to do.”*

Example 1 is a **"un-satisfactory"** message because it's simply a compliment to the student that posted the original message. It doesn't move the discussion forward or add anything substantial to the discussion.

Example 2 – *“I have to agree. Having a SME or experienced designer look at the work is of tremendous help. It is so easy to assume things, and leave out steps here and there. It is certainly not as easy as it looks, and I can see where this process makes for a much better learning experience for the participants.”*

Example 2 is a **"un-satisfactory"** message because the student is simply agreeing with a statement made by another student. This message does little to move the discussion forward.

Example 3 – *“I disagree with your definition of soft technology. Can you please tell me how you came to that conclusion?”*

Example 3 is a **"un-satisfactory"** message because, although the student disagrees, he doesn't expand on his question by saying why he disagrees.

Examples of "satisfactory" messages: These messages add to the discussion by clarifying information or showing how it can be applied in a particular situation, but they don't break down individual thoughts and ideas to create something new or criticize an idea based on new thoughts.

Example 4 – *“As far as having used behavioral objectives, I've used them to advertise the training and again at the beginning of training in order to explain to employees what they're going to learn. For instance, an example of a behavioral objective in training for managers would be: "At the end of the class, participants will be able to define the steps in the disciplinary process." In describing the behavior, I agree that using action verbs such as define, rather than a verb like understand lets the employee know that he/she will actually be able to do something at the end of the training.”*

Example 4 is a **"satisfactory"** message because the student displays knowledge of behavioral objectives and she gives an example.

Example 5 – *“As an example, I work with someone who is an instructional designer, yet he's one of the slowest in adapting new elements and methods to our work. My point is that although his background is in the training field, he just couldn't seem to transition and apply that to Web-based training. Perhaps his individual capacity just isn't tailored to developing this type of training application.”*

Example 5 is a "**satisfactory**" message because this student shows comprehension of the definition of the term "capacity," as it's used in Gilbert's Behavioral Engineering Model, and is applying that definition to an example at her work.

Example 6 – "Perhaps the next important thing to consider is: Does the measurement we make (or invent) have meaning? Can it be applied in a useful manner or is it just more information? Can this measurement be used to produce or improve results?"

Example 6 is a "**satisfactory**" message because the student is asking questions to move the discussion forward. Notice that the questions in this message are more specific than the question in Example 3. If this student had attempted to answer her own questions by providing some solutions on how to ensure measurement was useful, the posting may have been considered substantial.

Examples of "exemplary" messages. These messages add to the discussion by identifying important relationships, putting ideas together in some unique way, or offering a critique as a point of discussion.

Example 7 – "I believe that learning is more effective if we allow learners to create their own behavioral objectives. Like Driscoll, I believe that "Learners are not empty vessels waiting to be filled, but rather active organisms seeking meaning." Bearing in mind that we are all products of our own experiences; be it socioeconomic, gender specific, cultural and/or family related, I firmly believe that the learning needs of learners should always be the force which guides the instructional development process and the crafting of meaningful behavioral objectives. Therefore, differentiated instruction is of paramount importance if we are to provide meaningful learning environments, which emulate challenge, variety, creativity and innovation. Consequently, a synergistic blend between Bloom's Taxonomy and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences must be found if learning is to be truly effective.

Example 7 is a "**exemplary**" message because the student is combining ideas learned from various resources into a new thought.

Example 8 – "I agree with the statement "learning is generally less effective when only the learners create the objectives", However, I would not wish to lump ALL learners into this category, whether they are intellectually gifted or not. I believe that in much instruction the student is an integral part of defining the objective, especially in skills training, or efficiency of operations. If a company has been producing X product in the same manner for an extended time, it is reasonable to believe that new employees have been trained in that "tried and proven" method of production. However, as times and markets change, production techniques must also change. The student (employee) who is being taught the same "old" method would invariably attempt to modify the technique to increase efficiency of the production. If the student is stifled by being held only to the objectives stated in the training, no improvement will be made and the company will ultimately suffer.

Example 8 is a "**exemplary**" message because the student is disagreeing and making a contrary argument, based on an evaluation of the idea expressed in a previous message.

Example 9 – "I'm a Thomas Gilbert fan and I saw a parallel here with Gilbert's Behavioral Engineering Model and what Rossett is calling barriers. Barriers, of course, could include anything, including supervisor resistance (data and incentives), lack of alignment between training and actual work (knowledge), lack of tools (information), lack of information (data)."

Example 9 is a "**exemplary**" message because the student is identifying relationships between ideas presented by Gilbert and Rossett. Another thing to notice here is that messages don't have to be long to be "significant", but they do have to show a level of analysis, synthesis, or evaluation of the material.

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A final guideline for postings, make sure your posted comments are **CRISP:**

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| Considerate. | You may have strong views and will want to express those views. That's great. But remember that others may have equally strong views that are the polar opposite of your views. Feel free to question, challenge, or disagree with anything in the discussion, but do so in a respectful, considerate way. |
| Reflective | An asynchronous discussion may lack the spontaneity of a live discussion. But this can be an advantage. There is more time to think before responding. Take the time to think about the ideas that have been expressed (in the readings and the discussion) from the perspective of your own experience. Then add your own comments and insights. |
| Interactive | Remember that you're a participant in a discussion and talk with one another. During boot camp, you learned how to respond to posted messages and how to cut and paste parts of previous messages into your message. Use these methods. The idea is to be interactive , not just active. |
| Succinct | Get to the point. Short, focused message are usually more effective than long comments. |
| Pertinent | Comments and questions should be related to the discussion topic. There will be times when you want to talk with someone about something unrelated to the topic. That's fine. But the place to do that is the Hallway or the Campus Student Union. When you enter into a weekly discussion, please remember that you're in a classroom, not a chat room. |