Communicating orally

Assessing class participation

In disciplines where a professional must be able to communicate orally with a high degree of skill, teachers have frequently included assessment of class participation as a fraction, usually less than 20%, of subject grades. While we must recognize that the context of a classroom is very different from those in the real world there must, therefore, be some doubt about the validity of this as an assessment of students’ abilities in settings other than classrooms, the practice does, at least, communicate to students the importance placed on these skills.

The following case study addresses a number of issues which need careful consideration if class participation is to be assessed; it also suggests very strongly that this means of assessment may encourage deep student learning and so could be good practice regardless of its effects on communication skills.
Criteria for the assessment of class participation

Assessment of Class Participation
Legal System-Torts
Annette Marfording

Abilities I am seeking to develop further include

Knowledge and understanding of subject matter
- recall, report, recount
- relate new information to previous knowledge

Ability to think critically and to justify one's ideas
- develop an argument
- apply ethical values
- determine criteria for assessment or evaluation
- reflect, evaluate, assess, judge

Problem solving skills
- identify problems/issues
- review, analyse, apply relevant law
- be creative, innovative

Oral communication skills
- argue, advocate, present personal opinion
- be articulate, concise

Criteria for Assessment

Quality of Contribution
Demonstrated ability in four areas listed above

Quality of preparation for class
- Evidence of reading, analysis and understanding
- Consistency of preparation
- Indication of reading outside set materials

Contribution to group climate
- Preparedness to listen to others
- Respect for other people's ideas
- Constructive criticism
- No domineering
- Helping other students

Attitude to learning and the subject
- Interest and motivation
- Attentiveness in class
- Willingness to contribute
- Progress in participation for those with initial difficulty
Method of assessing class participation

APPENDIX "A"
A NOTE ON SELF-ASSESSMENT

You will be required to assess your own participation in class. This is not a cop-out by academic staff, as we will be making an evaluation of your participation. But one of the objectives of the law subjects at Wollongong is to enable you to develop your own learning skills. You will need to assess your own learning performance at various stages in your career, so in this subject, and in other subjects, you will receive assistance in developing your ability to assess your own performance.

Academic assessment is supposed to be a process by which the achievement of specified objectives is measured. The objectives of class participation are:

1. to provide an opportunity to get you to develop your learning skills:
   a. to reinforce your own learning (i.e. to see whether you have correctly learnt and understood the assigned material)
   b. to give an incentive for you to plan, allocate and manage your own time, including the development of techniques of selective reading and making judgements about the priority to be given to different tasks

2. to assist other members of the class to give and provide feedback on their learning

3. to indicate to academic staff that you either have understood the material or whether you need assistance

4. to assist you to develop skills of
   a. expressing arguments orally
   b. expressing abstract and complex ideas orally
   c. listening
   d. comprehension.

In this context, we have stated what we think the objectives of the process are. In real life, you will need to work out your own objectives and the way in which you measure them. For this purpose you will have to work out the criteria by which you assess whether or not you achieve the objectives.

Each four weeks, you will be asked to complete a form which will ask you to rate your achievement of each of the objectives listed above on a six-point scale, and to give yourself an overall score. This form will also give you an opportunity to indicate any abnormal factors affecting your work. We will check your self-assessment against our assessment of your participation, and will discuss with you any different perception we may have of your participation. You may be aware of factors affecting your participation of which we are unaware. The figure ultimately recorded will be agreed, though academic staff must reserve the final power of decision. When we have used this method previously, we find that initially students tend to underestimate their own participation, but by the end of the session, there is a good measure of agreement between staff and students.

A sample self-assessment form appears on the next page.
Communication – Class Presentation
Oral presentation assessment schedule

**UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**
**FACULTY OF LAW**

**Self-Assessment Sheet No:**

**Student’s name:**

**Tutor/Lecturer’s name:**

**Subject:** From …/…/19... to …/…/19...

During this period I assess my participation in each of the following areas as follows:

- **Note:**
  - F (0-44%), extremely poor
  - P. (45-59%) poor;
  - CR. (60-64%). acceptable/average
  - HD. (65-75%), above average; very good achievement in part
  - D. (75-85%), well above average; very good achievement overall
  - HD. (85-100%), outstanding in all respects.

**TICK EACH ROW IN THE APPROPRIATE COLUMN**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA OF ACTIVITY</th>
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<th>CR</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>PC</th>
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<td>Assisting other members of the class</td>
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<td>Expressing and countering arguments orally</td>
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<td>Understanding and expressing abstract and complex ideas orally</td>
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Special factors affecting me during this period were:

[NOTE: In making the next assessment, you must decide how much weight you give to each of the above factors in the light of the need to measure achievement of your learning objectives]

Overall, I assess my participation in class during this period at %.
Oral Presentation Assessment Schedule

Objective: To successfully deliver a spoken presentation

Aspect 1. Speaker appearance and other first impressions

- Dressed appropriately, tidy and free of distracting features
- Relaxed and comfortable poise
- Speaker appeared confident and purposeful before starting to speak
- Speaker attracted audience's attention from the outset
- Little or no fidgeting and few distracting mannerisms

Aspect 2. Presentation structure

Introduction

- Title/topic made clear
- Purpose of the presentation clear
- Organisational framework made known to audience
- Unusual terms defined adequately

Body of presentation

- Main points stated clearly
- Sufficient information and detail provided
- Sufficient periodic recapitulation
- Appropriate and adequate use of examples/anecdotes
- Correspondence of presentation content to introductory framework
- Discussion flowed logically

Conclusion

- Ending of presentation signalled adequately
- Main points summarised adequately/ideas brought to fruition
- Conclusion linked to opening
- Final message clear and easy to remember
Communication  Formal presentation

In the Aims of the Cooperative Education program it is stated:
The Cooperative Education program is a key strategy for helping students develop each of the capabilities central to the degree program, and is particularly strong in enabling students to extend and apply their learning beyond the educational institution. It is important to appreciate that the Co-operative Education program is not simply work experience, but rather a strategy of applied learning.

The capabilities referred to include:
- critical thinking
• problem solving
• effective teamwork
• technical competence in both subject discipline, eg. accounting; and in applying business tools, eg. computer software
• effective oral and written communication
• research
• Reflective thinking
• problem posing
• independent learning

Learning contracts are signed by the student, the employer and the academic supervisor. On completion of the project there are four assessment events -
• written report
• oral presentation
• work performance evaluation
• critical thinking interview

This case study focuses on the oral presentation.

Abilities being assessed
• oral presentation skill appropriate to the context in which students have been operating.
• Criteria are specifically indicated on grading sheets, pages following.
• Procedures for assessing

Students had 30 minutes to give their presentation and to answer questions. The topic was their cooperative education experience; that is, the oral presentation is based on their written report, or aspects of it.

The written report is a critical analysis and reflection on their cooperative experience. Performance criteria include:
1. analysis of theories that underlie the work they did;
2. importance of their work to the organization;
3. analysis of what was successful;
4. analysis of contribution to student’s own learning and professional growth, etc.

The audience included members of the firm in which the students had worked, so there was a total of 4-8 people in the classroom used for the testing - which was rearranged to simulate a boardroom. Any AV resources the student requested, eg. slide projector, video.

### Minimum Competency for Oral Presentations

The criteria listed below are those expected in any organization in the commercial world. A pass will indicate that the student is competent to represent that organization in a public form.

To this end the student will demonstrate the ability to:
• Choose an appropriate standard of dress for the occasion
• Demonstrate eye contact with the audience
• Speak with impact
• Clarify specialist terms
• Appear please to be sharing time and expertise
• Greet all listeners courteously
• Commence the address at the time scheduled
• Conclude the address within the given time limit
• Use visual aids effectively
• Invite and conduct question time constructively
• Include appropriate content

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<thead>
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<th>Criteria</th>
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<td>Physical Presence</td>
<td>Comment</td>
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<td>Standard of dress for occasion</td>
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<td>Stance/ body language</td>
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<td><strong>Eye contact with audience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hand and body gestures</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Use of location in room</strong></td>
<td><strong>Audience rapport</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Vocal Skills</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Projection</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Clarity of communication</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Clarity of pronunciation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Delivery rate</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Use of pauses</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Use of explanatory language</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Minimization of jargon</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Attitude</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Acknowledgement of variations in audience understanding</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Enthusiasm</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Approachability</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Use of examples</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Unobtrusive use of notes</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Visual Aids</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Impact</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Integration into presentation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Management</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Questioning</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Approach to audience</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Listening ability</strong></td>
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<td><strong>To main focus of the written report</strong></td>
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