

Increasing Participation in Student Seminars

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Problems to solve...

- Hard to get good attendance for student-led seminars & presentations
 - Come only when *they* have to present
 - Aware of UG's attendance policy
- Questions/discussion often weak
 - “Are there any questions?” → glassy stares
 - Boring for audience, unhelpful for presenter



Objectives

1. Obtain high attendance
 - Decent audience honours student prep
 - Audience may learn something new!
2. Stimulate lively discussions
 - Stretches student presenter
 - Part of active, engaged learning
 - Feeling for all that time well-spent
- *But... don't violate UG policies*



Solution with Participation Marks

■ Keys:

- Make audience into engaged listeners
- Use participation marks as incentive

■ Mechanism:

■ Use 2-part forms...

- 1st part: Turn in for participation mark
- 2nd part:
 - Read out jotted questions during discussion time
 - Afterward, give to presenter for anonymous feedback



How it Works

- Buy Staples Blueline Sales Order Pads, G3NCR.10, Item #36331
 - “Value Pack” of 10 pads works out to \$1.59 ea. or **under 4¢** per student per seminar
 - Use along with rubric that tells what to write in “Sold By” “COD” “Total” etc.
 - After a few times, students no longer need to consult the rubric

Form & Rubric Side by Side

Name _____ ①

③	SOLD BY	COD	CHARGE	ON ACCOUNT	AMOUNT FWD.
1 2 3... ②					
				TOTAL	③
				SIGNATURE	④

1. Write **your** name on the line.
2. While you listen, think of at least two good questions, and write them on the numbered lines.
3. During the reflection time, rate these aspects of the presentation on a 4-point scale (4=very good ... 1=poor), then fill in the corresponding boxes from left to right:

4	3	2	1
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 - **SOLD BY:** **Organization** Logical & easy to follow Hopelessly confused
 - **COD:** **Content:** Quite appropriate for topic Inappropriate, doesn't work
 - **CHARGE:** **Appearance of Slides** Professional & easy to read Hard to read, unattractive
 - **ON ACCOUNT:** **Use of Slides** Vary skillful Vary awkward
 - **AMOUNT FWD.:** **Style** Lively & stimulating Struggling to keep attention
 - **TOTAL:** **Overall** Outstanding! Adequate Weak Inadequate
4. Rate the speaker's voice using a 4-point scale, and write the two numbers for Loudness / Intelligibility separated by a slash in the SIGNATURE box (e.g., 3 / 2):

LOUDNESS	RATING	INTELLIGIBILITY
Too loud!	4	Sounds affected
— 3 = Fine —		
A little soft	2	Some words muddled
Often can't hear you	1	Often can't understand you

5. During the reflection period, you can write comments, then tear off the top page and hand it in.
6. After questions/discussion, tear off the bottom page (but keep your name) and hand it in as feedback.



Procedure

- Hand out sales books before seminars
- While talk in progress...
 - Audience evaluating presentation
 - Jotting at least 2 questions on form
- 1-2 mins. “reflection” to finish filling form
 - Tear off top page, with own name → Inst.
- Discussion period
 - Audience reading questions they jotted
 - Tear off 2nd page without name → Presenter for anonymous feedback



Instructor Marking

- Students receive participation mark for fully carrying out instructions (not just for “being there”)
 - I give one mark for each of 8 numerical ratings + one mark for each question = 10
 - Quick/easy to eyeball and tot up mark
- How much weight in course outline?
 - I’ve used 10% to 20% (all-seminar course)



Objectives Accomplished!

- Close to 100% attendance at *all* seminars
 - Of course they want the marks, but missing the odd seminar not very costly; *and yet...*
 - Apparently because of audience “buy in” as evaluators and discussants, students felt committed to being there
- “Endless lively discussion”
 - Everyone has at least 2 questions prepared, so always had to be cut off when time ran out



Added Benefits

- Presenters get honest, helpful peer eval
 - “Honest” since does not affect presenter’s mark (though Instructor could choose to do so)
- Audience engaged vs. bored
 - Eval gives something to do while listening, something to be attentive to
 - Eval reminds them of characteristics of good presentations
 - Can’t formulate questions without trying to follow logic of talk



More Benefits

- Helps ESL students
 - **In audience:** Since questions prepared, all they have to do is read them out
 - **As presenters:** If *peers* claim not to understand them, open to remedial help
- I also fill a form and use as input to my eval of seminar
 - See **Seminar Evaluation Form** (back)



Summary

- Staples two-part forms prove inexpensive, easy way to...
 - Get consistent great attendance at student seminars
 - Stimulate lively discussion
 - Without a lot of administrative fuss

- *Handouts:* 1) rubric; 2) Inst's evaluation