Tutorial Participation

What is a tutorial?

In most units at UC, you are required to attend tutorials - also called ‘tutes’. Tutorials are not like lectures. Instead, they involve analysing, discussing, and applying the unit content. There are usually about 20 to 30 students in a tutorial group, and students participate actively in activities or discussions.

A percentage of a student’s final grade may depend on their tutorial participation, so it is important to understand what tutorials are about and what tutors look for when they consider your participation mark. Tutorials give you an opportunity to:

- Ask questions
- Practise analytical thinking
- Practise problem solving
- Gain a fuller understanding of the theory
- Discuss how theory applies to reality
- Explore ideas by talking them through with others
- Learn from other students
- Gain important group work skills for your professional life

Participation in tutorials

Tutors will consider the quality of your participation as much as the quantity. When tutors consider your participation in tutorials, it is likely they will be thinking about the following things:

- Preparedness
- Engagement
- Involvement

Preparedness

In order to participate in tutorials, it is a useful to be prepared. Some ways to do this include completing the readings before the tutorial each week so you know about the topic, and compiling a list of useful questions and opinions to share in the tutorial. If the lecturer gives you some tutorial questions, answer these in preparation for the tutorial.
Engagement

Practise active listening. Listen attentively to each person who contributes. Knowing what is being said in the tutorial will help you create your own understanding and meaning and therefore position you better to contribute.

Involvement

There are many ways you can contribute meaningfully to the discussion, including:

• giving an example to illustrate what someone else has said
• agreeing, but adding additional comments or suggestions
• disagreeing - and giving your reasons
• comparing what has been said to something else you know about
• asking a question or introducing a new topic

People may agree or disagree with your idea, and that is okay; discussing ideas, even debating, is often a productive way of developing new ideas.

Language difficulties

If English is not your first language, your tutor and classmates may not be familiar with your accent. Even if you are very fluent in English they may find it difficult to understand. They will be patient, however, and will be keen to hear your input, so speak slowly and clearly. Restate your ideas if needed.

As a listener who has English as an additional language, try to prepare by doing the tutorial readings and writing notes. This can make it easier to understand what others are talking about in the class. Ask your classmates to speak more slowly if you cannot understand what they are saying. Be confident, and ask your tutor for help if needed.

Useful links

Guide to Discussion Skills, UNSW:
https://student.unsw.edu.au/discussion-skills

Participating in Tutorials, University of Adelaide: