

Disruptive Student Conduct in the Classroom or Other Learning Environments

What Constitutes Disruptive Behavior?

Disruptive student behavior is student behavior in a classroom or other learning environment (to include both on and off-campus locations), which disrupts the educational process and whether behavior is considered disruptive is defined by an Instructor. Disruptive class behavior includes, but is not limited to, verbal or physical threats, use of any obscenity, unreasonable interference with class discussion, heckling or interrupting any speaker making/receiving personal phone calls, text messaging during class, excessive tardiness, leaving and entering class frequently in the absence of notice to instructor of illness or other extenuating circumstances, and persistent, disruptive personal conversations with other class members. For purposes of this policy, it may also be considered disruptive behavior for a student to exhibit threatening, intimidating, or other inappropriate behavior toward the faculty, staff or classmates outside of class.

What Can Instructors Do to Prevent Student Behavioral Disruptions?

Instructors are the first line of defense when it comes to preventing and/or curtailing disruptive student behavior. A professor may adopt these preemptive steps to minimize the likelihood of such behavior:

- Including behavioral norms and expectations in the course syllabus/presentation. Discussing what constitutes disruptive classroom behavior at the first meeting of the class with periodic reminders as necessary.
- Establishing and maintaining an environment in which opposing views may be expressed in a civil and respectful manner.
- Exhibiting the type of behavior you expect from the students.
- Professors will attempt to deal with disruptive student behavior in a calm, courteous and direct fashion before it escalates or becomes an ongoing pattern. They may ask the disruptive student to meet after class or during office hours so that they may address the issue in private. The professor may ask a colleague to sit in on the meeting with the student. The professor may warn the student that further disruptions can result in disciplinary action. The professor may document this verbal warning for his or her own records, and will keep the Department Chair or supervisor informed of problematic interactions with students.

If the disruptive behavior continues after the instructor has had a private conversation with the student, then the faculty/staff member may consult with the Offices of the Dean of Arts and Sciences, Undergraduate Academic Advising, Undergraduate Dean of Students, or School of Education Office of Graduate Advising, as relevant, to discuss ways to resolve the situation informally. Issues of disruptive behavior or unprofessional dispositions on the part of graduate students in the School of Education must be reported to the Office of Graduate Advising in the School of Education.

What can Instructors do in Response to Disruptive Student Behavior?

Step One: Instructor Warns Student

When disruptive behavior occurs:

- The instructor should warn the student. The warning will consist of orally notifying the student that (a) his/her behavior is disruptive, and (b) it must cease immediately, or else face removal from the classroom or other context, and/or be subject to other disciplinary action.
- If the student fails to comply with the instructor's warning, the instructor may require that the disruptive student immediately leave the classroom or area for the remainder of the class period/presentation. If the student refuses to leave, the instructor may summon Campus Safety to remove the student.
- If the instructor believes that the student's disruptive behavior poses an immediate threat to the safety of the instructor, the student, or any other students or persons, the instructor may summon Campus Safety to remove the student, regardless of whether a warning has been issued.
- The instructor will decide whether the student will be allowed to return to the classroom or area. If the instructor chooses to allow the student to return to the class/presentation and continue in the course/event, the process is resolved.
- If the instructor believes the student should not be permitted to return to the class to continue in that course, s/he should proceed to Step Two, below.

Step Two: Withdrawal Process

A. The Instructor

1. If the instructor decides that withdrawing the student from the course is necessary, s/he shall, within two (2) working days of the disruptive incident, provide the department chair with a written report of the disruptive incident(s).
2. If the instructor has the disruptive student in more than one class and decides that the student is disrupting learning in more than one of those classes, or exhibiting threatening and/or intimidating behavior outside the class (e.g., in the instructor's office, outside the classroom), the instructor has the authority under this policy to initiate removal of the student from all courses taught by that instructor, with the signed approval of the Department Chair, Dean of the relevant school, or designee, or Provost.

B. Department Chair

Except for extenuating circumstances, the Department Chair will:

1. Notify the student in writing, via e-mail and campus mail/U.S. mail, within 2 days of receiving the instructor's notice that the matter has been submitted to the Department Chair for a decision on whether the student should be removed from the course, and that s/he may not return to the class until the issue is resolved. This notice shall include a written description of the reported disruptive behavior and a copy of the Disruptive Student Conduct in the Classroom or Other Learning Environment Policy, which includes a description of the appeals process.
The student will also be informed that if s/he wishes to respond to the complaint, s/he must submit a written statement, within 2 days of receiving the Department Chair's notice, to the Department Chair and meet with the Department Chair within five (5) working days from the date of the written notice. The Department Chair's contact information should be included.
2. The Department Chair should make her/himself available to meet with the student as soon as possible within 5 working days after written notice to the student.
3. Decide on the appropriate outcome and send notice of the decision to the student, explaining the basis for the decision. The decision may consist of
 - a. Allowing the student to return to course or courses, with or without conditions;

- b. Allowing or requiring the student to transfer to another course section or sections; or
 - c. Withdrawing the student from the involved course or courses.
4. Notify the student via e-mail and Campus mail/U.S. mail of his/her decision within 5 working days of receiving the student's response. If the Department Chair decides that the student should be removed from the involved course or courses, s/he will notify the Registrar and Dean of the appropriate school via email that the student should be withdrawn. A copy of the withdrawal email will be mailed to the student by the Department Chair via e-mail and Campus Mail/U.S. mail at the time the Department Chair's written notice of his/her decision is sent. The Department Chair will also include notice that the student may appeal the decision by submitting a written appeal to the Dean of the of appropriate school or designee, detailing the basis of the student's denial of the charges, within 5 working days from the date of the Department Chair's written notice of his/her decision.

Step Three: The Appeals Process

The student may appeal the decision of the Department Chair in writing to the Dean of the relevant school or their designees, as appropriate. The student's appeal must be received by the appropriate Dean or designee in writing within 5 working days of the date of the Department Chair's decision. The decision shall be made and, except for extenuating circumstances, will be sent to the student within five 5 working days of receipt by the Dean or designee of the student's appeal via e-mail and campus mail/U.S. mail.

Step Four: Final Resolution

According to college policy, students who are withdrawn from a course for disruptive behavior will receive a grade of W. If the charge of disruptive behavior is upheld, regardless of whether the student is allowed to return to the course, the student is responsible for any loss of tuition monies and/or financial aid. In the event a decision is made at any point in this process that the student was removed without sufficient cause, then the student will be allowed to immediately return to the course without penalty and the Department Chair will work with the student to facilitate the completion of any work missed. The Department Chair or appropriate Dean or designee, depending upon where the decision ends, will notify the Registrar's Office and appropriate Dean's Office of the final decision on the matter.

What Confidentiality Standards Should I Follow?

Please note that all information and discussion regarding the disruptive student shall be handled in a confidential manner. The privacy of the student's educational records, including misconduct cases, is protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). For information on FERPA, go to: <http://www.ed.gov>

Disruptive Behavior and Disability

A student with a disability is not exempt from the college's behavioral expectations, rules, and regulations. Disruptive behavior by such students will be responded to as any other disruptive activity.