

FACULTY RIGHTS REGARDING CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

As representatives of the University, faculty members have the right to “set reasonable standards of conduct in order to safeguard the educational process” and to respond appropriately to classroom disruptions. University faculty members have the right to expect students to behave in a civil manner in the classroom. The following information is designed to serve as a guide to faculty for dealing with inappropriate classroom behavior.

The University defines a disruption as “*an action or combination of actions by an individual or a group that unreasonably interferes with, hinders, obstructs, or prevents the regular and essential operation of the University or infringes upon the rights of others to freely participate in its programs and services.*”

Below are some examples that, depending on their severity or frequency, may inhibit or interfere with normal classroom operation.

- Cell phone/beeper interruption
- Direct challenges to instructor authority
- Eating/drinking in the classroom
- Arriving late/leaving early
- Vulgar or offensive behavior
- Excessive chattering
- Reading newspaper or other overt inattentiveness
- Talking out of turn and/or dominating discussion

CONFRONTING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

When students act out in the classroom it is important to confront the behavior as quickly as possible while treating the student with respect. A failure to address disruptive behavior can often lead to its escalation and result in an environment that is not conducive to learning. When confronting behavioral issues:

1. The faculty member should identify the inappropriate behavior, request that it should not be repeated, and explain that it is disruptive to the rest of the class.
2. If the disruption continues, faculty members have the authority to request that the student(s) leave the classroom.
3. For grievous disruptions (e.g. fighting, threats of violence), staff from the Office of Police and Safety Services should be contacted. Officers may be reached at 898-6101 or 898-6231 for immediate dispatch to the class.

Subsequent to removing a student from the classroom, the faculty member is strongly encouraged to immediately notify the Director of Student Affairs. This office has the ability to identify students who show patterns of disruptive behavior in multiple courses. Such patterns of disruptive behavior may be an indication of a student in crisis. This also helps to provide documentation of the incident in the event that the matter escalates. Faculty members are encouraged, as necessary, to consult with their school director and/or program coordinator.

Faculty members do not have the authority to permanently bar a student from their classroom or to expel a student from their course. However, faculty members may refer students guilty of egregiously inappropriate behavior to the Office of Student Affairs for Judicial Affairs proceedings. These students will not be permitted to return to the faculty member’s classroom until the formal due process procedures are completed. To initiate this process:

1. Contact the Director of Student Affairs immediately after the incident. An email detailing the behavior in question, the impact on the classroom environment, and the faculty member’s recommendation as to whether the student should be referred to the campus judicial system should be sent as soon as possible after the incident.
2. The Director of Student Affairs, or other Judicial Affairs designee, will summon the student to a meeting to discuss the incident. If official disciplinary action is to be taken, the student will be afforded all due process rights specified by the Office of Judicial Affairs. The faculty member, as well as any other witnesses, may be required to participate in an Administrative Hearing or University Hearing Board. If official disciplinary action is not to be taken, the director or designee will have an educational conference with the student which will be maintained on file should future behavioral issues arise.

3. If the student is found to be in violation of University policy, the appropriate sanction will be identified. Sanctions imposed by the judicial system may include moving the student to another section of the course or administrative removal from the course resulting in a grade of "F."

RESPONSIBILITY TO COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS

As members of the college community, it is a general expectation that students are to act appropriately in the classroom. A reinforcement of this message from all faculty members is extremely helpful. In particular, faculty members are strongly encouraged to add a statement to their syllabi regarding their expectations for classroom behavior. If there is an expectation that students are to be on time for class or fully participate in group projects, clearly indicate this on the syllabus, particularly if an academic penalty is to be imposed as a result of being late or not participating. Clear standards of behavior set by faculty at the beginning of a course can be a powerful deterrent to inappropriate behavior. A sample syllabus statement is provided below.

Office & Classroom Etiquette and Classroom Participation

Your interactions with faculty and staff members at the University serve as the training ground for your professional career. Here are some basic rules that you are expected to follow at the University.

- *Responsible classroom participation and etiquette are expected:*
 - ✓ *Turn assignments in on time and in a form on which you are proud to have your name.*
 - ✓ *Choose non-distracting attire for classroom presentations.*
 - ✓ *Practice respectful listening.*
 - ✓ *Use clean, non-vulgar language at all times.*
 - ✓ *Do not infringe on the privacy of others; e.g., you should not look over someone's shoulders to read what they are typing or writing in class.*
 - ✓ *Turn off cell phones and other electronic devices during class and lab.*
 - ✓ *Maintain appropriate personal hygiene.*
 - ✓ *Do not use tobacco products during class or in the labs.*
- *Appropriate interactions with faculty and staff members are expected:*
 - ✓ *Always wait to be invited into an office. If a faculty member's door is open and they are present, you should stop at the door, knock on the door frame, and wait to be invited in.*
 - ✓ *If an office door is closed then you should knock and wait to be invited in. Never "try" a closed door. If the door is closed, it has been done so for a reason.*
 - ✓ *Use proper salutations in their proper social context. When you are in the role of a student in a University setting, you should greet your instructors as "Doctor X" when you know that X holds a Ph.D. When in doubt you can always use "Professor X." Avoid first names or "Mr." and "Mrs." unless asked to do so.*
 - ✓ *You should not start a conversation with "Are you busy?" Everybody on this campus is busy. A better opening is "May I have a minute of your time?" This implies that you recognize that you are asking for a piece of a finite resource.*
 - ✓ *"Please" and "thank you" are appreciated.*
- *Faculty members have the authority to request that a disruptive student leave the classroom.*

CAMPUS RESOURCES FOR CONSULTATION

Should a faculty member wish to discuss a student's behavior in class, he/she is encouraged to contact either the school director or director of Student Affairs at 898-6111.

OTHER RESOURCES

- *Student Guide to General University Policies and Rules* (<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/judicial/pdf/policiesrules.pdf>)
- *Code of Conduct* (<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/judicial/codeofconduct/>)
- *Office of Student Conduct Procedures* (<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/conduct/policies>)