



Classroom Guidelines For Dealing With Disruptive Behavior



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Table of Contents

What are the Rights of the Instructor?	3
What Is Disruptive Behavior?.....	4
What may be the Cause(s) for the Disruptive Behavior?	4
How Can Disruptive Behavior Be Prevented?.....	4
What Should The Response Be To Disruptive Behavior?.....	5
What If Disruptive Behavior Continues?.....	6
What If the Behavior Becomes Threatening Or Violent?	7
Meeting With a Threatening or Potentially Violent Student	7
What Should Be Included In Documentation?.....	8
What If The Student Claims The Disruptive Behavior Is The Result Of A Disability?	8

INTRODUCTION

Along with faculty and students, the Office of Student Conduct assumes responsibility to help create and maintain a campus environment that supports effective instruction and enhances student learning.

In a community of learners, it is expected that students will conduct themselves in an orderly manner. However, when student misconduct does occur, corrective action needs to be taken. These guidelines are designed to help instructors address disruptive student behavior and determine the appropriate course of action.

From time to time, instructors may have a student who is truly disruptive in the classroom, making it difficult or impossible for the delivery of education to take place. The following guidelines will assist instructors in dealing with these situations from a student discipline perspective. They are not intended to provide information on classroom management or to tell instructors how to conduct their business.

1. Some disruptive student behaviors may be due to medical or psychological reasons. Although such students may be considered disabled and are protected under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, they are expected to meet the same standards of conduct as any student. It is important that an instructor establish the standards for his or her classroom and enforce them for all students, in conformance with the principles of academic freedom.
2. Some students' behavior may seem to be bizarre, but not threatening. The instructor may want to discuss the student's behavior with professionals, such as a member of the Mental Health Services staff. The instructor may also contact an Office of Student Conduct representative, who will consult with appropriate members of the professional staff and the instructor in developing suggestions for working with the student. Care must be taken to protect the privacy of the student.
3. There may be situations occurring outside of the classroom where instructors feel threatened or very uncomfortable with a student's behavior. It is important that such behavior be immediately reported to Campus Police, the Academic Dean and/or the Office of Student Conduct so that appropriate interventions can be made before the situation escalates.
4. Instructors should call upon the Academic Dean and/or The Office of Student Conduct Office for help and advice in dealing with the disruptive classroom behavior.

If the situation cannot be resolved by the instructor and the Academic Dean, the campus Conduct Officer should be notified immediately. Instructors should be aware that notes of the dates, witnesses, and details of the incidents of disruption may be important in any future formal proceedings which may be necessary.

5. In extreme cases in which, in the judgment of the instructor, a student's conduct threatens his/her own health and safety or the health and safety of others, or a student is so highly disruptive that instruction cannot take place, immediate removal from the classroom is appropriate, and the instructor has the right to ask the student to leave the class. If a student fails to do so, the instructor should contact Campus Police for immediate assistance.

Nothing in these guidelines is intended to infringe upon the academic freedom of students or teachers. Two fundamental principles must be observed: 1) students have the right to express opinions germane to the subject matter of a course; 2) faculty have the right to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the classroom time made available to students for the expression of their opinions. The responsibility for striking a balance between these principles rests with faculty.

What are the Rights of the Instructor?

As an instructor, you have the right to direct students to cease disruptive classroom behavior immediately. If it becomes necessary, you can also direct a student to leave your classroom for the rest of the class period. If they fail to comply with your directives to cease their disruptive behavior or leave the classroom:

1. You should report their failure to do so to Academic Dean and the Office of Student Conduct (formerly Judicial Affairs) promptly following the class via email or letter; or
2. In the cases where the disruptive behavior is interfering with your ability to instruct class or student's ability to learn, you should contact Campus Police immediately and have the student removed from the class, and then report the matter to the Academic Dean and the Office of Student Conduct.

What Is Disruptive Behavior?

Disruptive behavior can be defined as behavior that substantially or repeatedly interferes with the instructor's ability to conduct class or other students' ability to learn. Examples include:

- Electronic devices going off including the answering of cell phones;
- Repeated tardiness;
- Leaving class without permission;
- Talking in class without permission; Making noise and repeatedly interrupting;
- Reading newspapers/magazines in class;
- Eating/ drinking in class without permission;
- Being verbally abusive to the instructor or other students including personal insults;
- Persistent and unreasonable demands for time and attention, both in and out of the classroom;
- Refusing to comply with the directions of the instructor;
- Attempts to contact you at your home in inappropriate ways;
- Behaviors indicating a romantic or other obsessive interest in you;
- Intimidating or harassing another person through words and/or actions;
- Threatening/intimidating/harassing the instructor or other students, regardless if verbally, written or through voice mail or e-mail communications;
- Threats of physical assault;
- Carrying or displaying weapons, destroying property or throwing objects in a manner reasonably perceived as threatening;

What may be the Cause(s) for the Disruptive Behavior?

- Underlying medical or psychological reasons or disabilities.
- Confusion about class expectations and/or material.
- Difficult transition to college norms.

How Can Disruptive Behavior Be Prevented?

1. Focus on the positive. Clearly articulate your expectations in your syllabus. Your syllabus is your contract with the student related to academic requirements in the course as well as required behaviors and conduct in the course. Describe appropriate behavior and how this relates to success in the course.

2. Define in your syllabus student behaviors that are unacceptable in your class. Review this information with students the first day of class. Include specific expectations for student behavior (e.g., no cell phones, no tardiness, etc. during class introduction and in your syllabus).
3. Clearly explain what consequences will occur if students violate your class rules.
4. Indicate that any violation of your class rules is also a violation of the TCC Student Conduct Code and could lead to a disciplinary hearing.
5. Confer with colleagues on ways they prevent or respond to disruptive behavior.
6. Model the behavior you expect of students.
7. Attend or request a workshop provided by Counseling Services, Campus Police and the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards regarding strategies for diffusing problems.

What Should The Response Be To Disruptive Behavior?

1. Respond to disruptive behavior when it occurs. Do not ignore disruptive behavior. Ignoring it WILL NOT make it disappear. To do so sends the message that you are condoning the behavior and results in the atmosphere of disrespect.
2. For minimal disruptiveness, consider expressing a general word of caution rather than warning or embarrassing a particular student. For example: "There are several conversations going on in here. Let's all focus on the topic."
3. Sometimes it may be necessary to speak to a student during class about his/her behavior. If so, correct the student in a courteous manner, and then ask the student to meet with you after class or during office hours. Meeting one-on-one often resolves the problem.
 - a. In meeting with the student, explain how his/her behavior is disruptive to you, other students and the classroom environment; Be specific about the behavior that is disruptive.
 - b. Explain what the consequences will be if the behavior continues, such as having to meet with the Academic Dean and/or the Office of Student Conduct representatives, and possibly then be removed from class.
 - c. Allow the student to respond. Listen carefully to the student. If the student is having problems outside the class setting that are affecting him/her, you may want to refer the Student Success Center or Counseling Services for help.
 - d. Restate your expectations for the student's future behavior.
 - e. Always document disruptive behavior and how you dealt with it. This is helpful if the behavior continues and you refer the matter to the Academic and the Office of Student

Conduct. It is highly advisable to report the matter to the Office of Student Conduct using the Disruptive Student Incident Report or e-mail, as this conduct may be occurring or have occurred in another class or facility on-campus. The Office of Student Conduct retains records of any student that has engaged in disruptive behaviors and will be able to determine if this is a pattern of behavior at the college.

What If Disruptive Behavior Continues?

1. If the student persists in being disruptive, you may ask the student to leave the classroom for the remainder of the period.
2. Explain to the student the reason for the action and state that he/she must meet with you before he/she can return to class.
3. Document the incident and consult with your Academic Dean and representative of The Office of Student Conduct. Remember, it is appropriate to have one of these individuals present when you meet the student.
4. In addition, you should complete a Disruptive Student Incident Report and send the report to The Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary action.
5. Some disruptive behavior simply reflects bad manners and a lack of consideration of others. If such conduct persists, inform the student you are required to report the behavior to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards Office and the case may be treated as a violation of the College's Student Code of Conduct. Behaving in disruptive ways in class and failing to comply with your directions to stop are both violations of College policy and will result in disciplinary action.
6. In other cases, however, disruptive behavior can be a result of psychological reasons. If suspect the behavior which you are dealing could be caused by such difficulties and you feel comfortable, you should contact Mental Health Services for advice on how to respond.
7. If the behavior is threatening or you believe the student may cause harm to others or him/herself, or the behavior is substantially disruptive to the classroom environment, Campus Police should be contacted immediately. Campus Police will contact The Office of Student Conduct and/or Counseling Services for further assistance, and the appropriate action will be taken to communicate with you and have the student removed from the class.

What If the Behavior Becomes Threatening Or Violent?

1. Call Campus Police whenever you believe there is a threat of violence or other unlawful behavior, including a student's refusal to leave class after being told to do so.
2. If necessary, dismiss class, leave with the students, and get in contact with Campus Police.
3. Campus Police will contact the appropriate college offices and officials for immediate intervention. The appropriate college official(s) will communicate the instructor and Academic Dean in address the matter and take immediate action to remove the student from the class.

Meeting With a Threatening or Potentially Violent Student

Do not meet alone with a potentially angry or hostile student. Always set up an appointment. This gives you the opportunity to develop a strategy.

- Let a colleague know you will be meeting with a potentially violent student and have that colleague ready to assist as well as someone from Campus Police nearby.
- Keep your door open.
- Position yourself so you can exit the room quickly.
- End the meeting if something doesn't feel right.
- Avoid body language that appears challenging.
- Slow your speech rate down – use a low pitch and volume.
- Establish the student's goal for the meeting. Establish your goal for the meeting. Negotiate a common goal and keep the student focused on the agreed upon goal.
- Listen carefully by really paying attention to what is said. Let the student know you will help within your ability to do so within reason.
- Ask questions – it helps to gain control and understand the situation.
- Neither agree with distorted statements nor attempt to argue. Do not be defensive.
- End the meeting if the student doesn't calm down; tell him/her that you will not continue unless he/she calms down.
- If a weapon is evident, leave. If that is not possible, calmly ask the person to leave the weapon in a neutral position as you continue talking calmly. If they're not already present, call CAMPUS POLICE as soon as possible.
- Never agree to leave to an unmonitored location.

What Should Be Included In Documentation?

1. Full name of student (include Student ID # if possible).
2. Date of each incident.
3. Describe the facts of the incident(s). Use quotes when possible. Avoid opinions and labels, such as "I think the student is totally paranoid."
4. Include the names of any witnesses.
5. Describe any attempts you have made to resolve the situation.

What If The Student Claims The Disruptive Behavior Is The Result Of A Disability?

1. The College may discipline a student with a disability or psychologically-based condition for being disruptive if it would impose the same discipline on a student without a disability or for a psychological reason.
2. The College will not tolerate or excuse disruptive or violent behavior from any student, especially when the behavior interferes with the instruction and the educational opportunities of other students.
3. Enforcing standards may actually encourage students with disabilities or a student engaging in conduct due to a medical or psychological reason to obtain needed assistance or to take prescribed medication.
4. Disabilities claims and accommodation requests should be discussed with the Student Accessibility Services staff.

Important Campus Phone Numbers

Campus Police Department
201-6100

Student Accessibility Services
201-8430

Office of Student Conduct
201-6141

Counseling Services
201-8440