

APPENDIX III: Classroom Behavior, "A Practical Guide for Faculty"

Classroom Disruption is a Disciplinary Offense

The term "classroom disruption" means behavior a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with conduct of a class. Examples range from persisting to speak without being recognized, to resorting to physical threats or personal insults.

Academic Freedom

College policies on classroom disruption cannot be used to punish lawful classroom dissent. The lawful expression of a disagreement with a teacher or other students is not itself "disruptive behavior."

Rudeness, incivility, and disruption are often distinguishable, even though they may intersect.

In most instances, it's better to respond to rudeness by example and suasion (e.g., advising a student in private that he or she appears to have a habit of interrupting others.) Rudeness can become disruption when it is repetitive, especially after a warning has been given.

Strategies to Prevent & Respond to Disruptive Behavior

Clarify standards for the conduct of your class. For example, if you want student to raise their hands for permission to speak, say so.

Serve as a role model for the conduct you expect from your students.

If you believe inappropriate behavior is occurring, consider a general word of caution, rather than warning a particular student (e.g., "we have too many contemporaneous conversations at the moment; let's all focus on the same topic.")

If the behavior is irritating, but not disruptive, try speaking with the student after class. Most students are unaware of distracting habits or mannerisms, and have no intent to be offensive or disruptive.

There may be rare circumstances when it is necessary to speak to a student during class about his or her behavior. Do so in a firm and friendly manner, indicating that further discussion can occur after class.

A student who persists in disrupting a class may be directed by the faculty member to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period. The student should be told the reason(s) for such action, and given an opportunity to discuss the matter with the faculty member as soon as practicable. Prompt consultation should be undertaken with the department chair and the dean of students. Suspension for more than one class period requires disciplinary action, in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct.

If a disruption is serious, and other reasonable measures have failed, the class may be adjourned, and campus security should be summoned.

Code of Conduct Violation

Disruptive classroom behavior is a disciplinary violation under the HCC's Student Code of Conduct. As such, students accused of this type of violation are subject to a disciplinary conference or hearing, depending upon the nature and frequency of the disruption.

Procedural Protections

Students accused of disciplinary violations are entitled to the following procedural protections:

- To be informed of the specific charges against them, and the identity of the complainant.
- To be allowed to request an informal resolution of the case.
- To be allowed reasonable time to prepare a defense.
- To hear and respond to all evidence upon which a charge is based.
- To call and confront relevant witnesses.
- To be assured of confidentiality, in accordance with the terms of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974*.
- To be allowed to request that any person conducting a disciplinary conference, or serving as a discipline conference committee member or chair, be disqualified on the ground of personal bias.
- To be provided with a copy of these rights prior to any conference of discipline hearing.
- To be considered innocent of the charges until proven guilty by clear and convincing evidence.

Sources: HCC Conduct Code *Synfax Weekly Report*, April 1, 1996
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