



Working with Disruptive Students in the Classroom

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What is Disruptive Behavior?

Behavior that interferes with or hinders the educational process of other students in the classroom.

Examples:

- Student continuously and aggressively interrupts instructor and other students.
- Student is on laptop and continuously interrupts class to share humorous items.
- Student rolls her eyes every time the instructor talks about a certain topic.
- Student starts a physical fight with another student.
- Student comes to the front of the room and stands in front of a visual presentation, blocking the instructor's view of the classroom, and the view of her fellow classmates.



Standards of Classroom Behavior

Primary responsibility for managing the classroom environment rests with the faculty.

Students who engage in any behavior that has the effect of disrupting a class may be directed by the faculty member to leave the class for the remainder of the class period.

Longer suspensions from class or dismissal on disciplinary grounds must be preceded by a disciplinary conference or hearing.

2016-17 Student Conduct Code



Ask Yourself...

- Is this student's behavior distressingly out of the ordinary?
- Is the behavior getting worse?
- Does the behavior place anyone at risk?
- Is this situation outside of my area of expertise?
- Am I feeling like I want to talk with someone about my observations or concerns?



Strategies for Managing the Classroom Environment

- Faculty and student safety are the first priority.
 - If harm is imminent, call Public Safety (x3636).
- Address student behavior, e.g., “I value different perspectives in our discussions, but must insist on civility.”
- If student is agitated and will not respond to redirection or comply with expectations, ask the student to leave class and schedule a time to speak with the student about your concerns.
- Talk with the student in a private location; mention you are concerned and cite specific reasons why you have concerns.
- Give the student time to talk about their situation; just listen.
- Re-establish expectations, communicate clearly, and provide resource referrals, as appropriate.
- Follow-up conversation with an email to be sure expectations are clear.
- Report incident to the Care Network.

What Options Do I Have After the Disruption?

Once the situation is contained, contact the Dean of Students Office to discuss appropriate follow-up:

- Behavioral contract with student
- Disability support/accommodations
- Consultation with Counseling Center
- Consultation with Public Safety
- Class debrief/coaching
- Reassignment to another course section
- Support resources for student, class members, faculty member
- Student Conduct Code complaint
- Interim suspension



Care Network

- Online portal that enables all faculty and staff to share concerns about students.
- Available 24/7 through myAU.american.edu.
- Enables early intervention by a network of Campus Life staff.
- Supports the ethic of care – not a disciplinary action.
- Well-received by students.



Accessing the Care Network



Personalized Links

Search Links  

- ⊖ Main Menu
- ⊖ **Life @ AU**
- Alcohol & Other Drugs Policy (PDF)
- Alternative Breaks
- Application for Driving Privileges
- Athletics & Recreation Information
- AU Travel Portal
- AUpedia on Athletics
- AUTO Van Program
- Campus Event Listing (R25)
- Campus Survey Results
- Car Pool Program
- CareNetwork: Express Concern About a Student**
- Carpool Permit Application
- Center for Community Engagement & Service
- Community-Based Learning & Research (CBLR)
- DC Reads
- Discover DC
- Driving Privileges Application
- EagleBucks Merchants
- eSuds - AU'S Online Laundry System
- First Year 411
- Freshman Service Experience (FSE)



YOUR CLASSROOM, YOUR SPACE; THEIR CLASSROOM, THEIR OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

- Faculty members need to establish a classroom environment in which all students can learn and should have the professional responsibility to treat their students with understanding, dignity and respect.
- Students should expect a classroom environment where they can learn and should have the responsibility to treat their professor and peers with understanding, dignity and respect.
- If students choose to disclose information about their disabilities and learning needs, the faculty member is responsible for making sure the students receive their ASAC approved accommodations, and demonstrating flexibility in working with the student to provide the best learning environment, as appropriate.



KNOW YOUR LIMITS AND USE CAMPUS RESOURCES

- Professors are educators and academicians; they are not necessarily experts in handling behavioral issues in their classroom.
- Faculty should reach out to campus experts who may be able to help them resolve issues with a disruptive student (Dean of Students, CTRL, ASAC, Counseling Center, Public Safety)



Prevention

1. Design a syllabus that sets the stage.
2. Create class ground rules with your students.
3. Expect respectful communication and model it.
4. Respond to disruptive behavior consistently and in a timely manner.
5. Label the disruptive behavior rather than “diagnosing” the student.
6. Expect uncomfortable discussions in the classroom and set up a system to handle them.
7. Recognize the diversity of stress/worry that students bring to campus.
8. Understand that every student has a baseline behavior and personality; look for changes.
9. Know your campus partners and recognize them as experts.



When Disruptive Behavior Occurs

STEP ONE:

Talk privately to the student about their behavior outside of the classroom, discuss potential remedies. Reinforce what you discussed in an email to the student.

If the problem persists...

STEP TWO:

Attempt to handle the disruptive behavior in the classroom, verbally requesting that the student stop the disruptive behavior. Reinforce what you discussed in an email to the student. Copy the Dean of Students and the Department Chair or Program Director. File a Care Network report. **If the problem persists...**

STEP THREE:

Ask the student to leave the classroom; the faculty member should never leave the class. Consult with the Dean of Students, or other appropriate campus partners to develop a plan for working with this particular student. File a Care Network report.

If the problem persists...

STEP FOUR:

If you feel uncomfortable asking the student to leave, if the student refuses to leave, if there has been harm or injury to the student or others, or fear of imminent harm or injury, call Public Safety for help at x3636.



Student Disabilities

Approximately 11%* of student body can be expected to have a disability – may be invisible or may not impact behavior

2015-2016 ASAC

971 students registered and received accommodations

Top three disabilities disclosed:

ADHD

Learning Disability

Psychological

Approximately 1/3 of the 971 students have multiple disabilities

* National Center for Education Statistics – 2011-2012



How Does Disability Affect the Classroom?

All students are expected to meet the same standards of conduct, regardless of disability.

Classroom accommodations that may support the student:

- Preferential seating

- Ability to take brief breaks

- No cold-calling

- Professor repeating questions or comments of other students

- Clear directions given both orally and in writing

- Agreed upon sign between student and professor to indicate when the student is over contributing or monopolizing discussion



Develop an Inclusive Teaching Environment

- Not everyone can think quickly on their feet – allow time for responses – especially important if class uses clickers.
- Offer a variety of options for students to demonstrate their knowledge.
- Think about the fundamental structure of your class and what, if anything can be altered, e.g., not appropriate to allow extended time to demonstrate CPR.
- Give context – connect with past information taught, and begin each class by outlining what will be covered.
- Give clear explanations and detailed instructions – use multiple formats, e.g., oral and written. Remember, not all students are good at making inferences.
- Focus on a student's behavior, not what you speculate may be causing the behavior.
- Engage in reflexive listening to ensure that you and the class understand what the student said.
- Never intentionally embarrass a student.



Animals in the Classroom

Service animals can only be a dog (or a miniature horse) – gets to go wherever handler goes and does not have to wear a vest.

Emotional support/therapy/assistance animal (ESA) – only if approved by the ASAC as an accommodation – student will have letter.

Determining if the dog is service dog or ESA – two questions only:

1. Do you have a disability?
2. Has the dog been trained to do a specific task related to your disability?

If the answer to both questions is yes, you cannot ask additional questions or ask for a demonstration.

ANY ANIMAL MUST BE UNDER THE CONTROL OF ITS HANDLER AT ALL TIMES AND CANNOT BE DISRUPTIVE.



When do I call the Police?

- ✓ **Uncomfortable vs. Unsafe**
- ✓ **Is the person a threat of injury or harm?**
 - **Medical Emergencies**
 - **Crisis Intervention Team**
 - **Threat Assessment Team**
 - **Active Shooter - RUN - HIDE - FIGHT**



Campus Police Contacts

202-885-3636

EMERGENCY

202-885-2527

NON-EMERGENCY

202-885-2526

Capt. Kevin Barrett

kbarrett@American.edu



Case Study #1

John arrived 10 minutes into the class period. I had already begun my lecture and was moving through the outline projected on the board when John raised his hand and asked if I could begin again since he was only a few minutes late. I responded that I would not begin again but that he could see me during my office hours to review the first few slides of the presentation. John slammed his notebook shut and stood up, then yelled in a loud voice while pointing his finger at me, saying, “You are the reason students don’t do well here! You are the reason students leave AU! Teachers like you only enjoy making us struggle and fight for everything we can get!” At that point, other students became uncomfortable, and some began snickering at him. John proceeded to turn to the class, and, raising his arms up and down, asked everyone to stand up if they were “with him.” I asked him to leave the room and he refused to do so saying if I was not going to give him a break, he was not about to give me a break. He continued to yell at his classmates and refused to leave.



Case Study #2

My class is one in which students are encouraged to express differing points of view, to challenge each other, and to take stances in class debate that may be different than that which they would normally take. Yesterday, Kim and Lisa were involved in a heated debate about the issue of global warming. Kim was doing well presenting her argument. Lisa became flustered and began to attack Kim on topics related to Kim's personal political point of view, making comments about her background, her family, and her religion.



Case Study #3

In my class, group work is an essential component for students to be able to grasp the course content and apply it to real world scenarios. I have students divided into groups of 4, and each week a different group is responsible for presenting on a topic related to the course content. Last Thursday, a group of four was presenting from the front of the classroom and one of the group members, Edward, was nervously pacing back and forth. At one point, he interrupted the presenter from his group to ask if he was “up next.” I have noticed Edward’s nervous behavior previously during class. He fidgets at his desk, repeatedly turning from side to side looking at his classmates. He asks questions out loud to people on either side of him while I am lecturing; the questions are often not related to the lecture. I have frequently had to stop and redirect his attention to me. During the presentation by his group, as he was pacing, another male student in the class said to him, “Dude, what’s your deal? Chill for a minute until it’s your turn. You drive everybody crazy with your constant moving around and asking dumb questions.” Multiple students snickered at this comment and he appeared embarrassed.



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