Classroom Disruption
An Advisory from the Dean of Students Office

1. Classroom disruption is seen as a disciplinary offense, as defined by the University's Code of Student Conduct. Classroom disruption is behavior that would be viewed as substantially or repeatedly interfering with normal class activities. Examples include repeatedly leaving and entering the classroom without permission, making loud or distracting noises, persisting in speaking without being recognized, or resorting to physical threats or personal insults.

2. A faculty member is responsible for management of the classroom environment. Teachers can be compared to judges; both focus on relevant issues, set reasonable time limits, assess the quality of ideas and expression, and ensure participants are heard in an orderly manner. While their ultimate goals may be different, both judges and teachers need to exercise authority with a sense of fairness, and with appreciation for the reality of human fallibility.

Disruptive conduct may determine a student’s fitness to continue in an academic program. Faculty should keep their department chair informed of any situation involving student behavior so that the appropriate assessments may be made regarding the student’s status.

3. A student has the right to freedom of inquiry, of legitimate classroom discussion, and of free expression of his or her opinion, subject to the teacher’s responsibilities to maintain order and to complete the course requirements. (See Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, Section 4).

4. Rudeness, incivility, and disruption are often repetitive, especially after a warning has been given. Rudeness can become disruption when it is seen as appropriate to the situation, irritability or logical thought.

5. Strategies to prevent and respond to disruptive behavior include the following:
   a. Share with students your explicit expectations for conduct in the course or classroom. For example, if you want students to raise their hands for permission to speak, say so, using reminders, as needed.
   b. Serve as a role model for the conduct you expect from your students.
   c. If you believe inappropriate behavior is occurring, offer general words 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).
   d. If the behavior is inappropriate, but not disruptive, speak with the student after class. Most students are unaware of distracting habits or mannerisms, and have no intent to be offensive or disruptive. Give the student a specific example of the behavior you want them to modify or eliminate.

6. There may be rare circumstances when it is necessary to speak to a student during class about his or her behavior. Try to do so firmly and with respect, indicating that further discussion can occur after class. Public arguments and harsh language must be avoided.

7. A student who persists in disrupting a class may be directed to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period. Whenever possible, consult with the Department Chair and the Dean of Students Office (852-5871) to review applicable University procedures.

8. If disruption is serious, and other reasonable measures have failed, the class may be adjourned and the University Police summoned (852-5787) to review applicable University procedures.

9. The Dean of Students Office can review University conduct procedures with you, and meet with accused students formally or informally. It is important to document and report disruptive incidents promptly, even if they seem minor. Our preferred strategies is to outline behavioral expectations with students, so they have clear guidelines about what is expected of them in the classroom setting.

10. The Dean of Students Office can review University conduct procedures with you, and meet with accused students formally or informally. It is important to document and report disruptive incidents promptly, even if they seem minor. One of our preferred strategies is to outline behavioral expectations with students, so they have clear guidelines about what is expected of them in the classroom setting.

FAQ on Dealing with Students in Distress

Q. What are some signs that a student may be in distress?
A student in distress may not be disruptive to others, but may exhibit behaviors which indicate something is wrong. Behaviors may include:

1. Serious grade problems or a dramatic change in performance.
2. Excessive absences or inconsistent attendance.
3. Unusual or changed patterns of interaction (e.g., avoiding participation, excessive anxiety when called upon, domination of discussions).
4. Other characteristics that suggest the student is having trouble managing stress (e.g., depressed, lethargic, or rapid speech; swollen, red eyes; marked change in personal dress and hygiene; sleeping during class).
5. Repeated requests for special consideration, especially if the student appears uncomfortable or highly emotional while disclosing the circumstances prompting the request.
6. New or repeated behavior which pushes the limits of decorum and interferes with the instructor’s effective management of the immediate environment.
7. Unusual or exaggerated emotional responses which appear inappropriate to the situation, infidelity or outbursts of anger.

Q. How should I respond to a student that is troubled or showing signs of distress?
For students who are mildly or moderately troubled, you can choose to respond to them in the following ways:

1. Provide direct contact on their behalf.
2. Address the situation privately with the individual(s).
3. Consult with a colleague, department head, the Dean of Students Office, the Counseling Center or Campus Health Services.
4. Refer the student to an appropriate University resource. See referral numbers on the front of this publication.

Q. What types of warning signs are most serious?
Severely troubled or disruptive students may exhibit behaviors that signify an obvious crisis and that necessitate emergency care. These problems are the easiest to identify. Examples include:

1. Highly disrupting behavior (e.g., hostility, aggression, violence).
2. Inability to communicate clearly (e.g., garbled, slurred speech; unconnected, disjointed, or rambling thoughts).
3. Loss of contact with reality (e.g., seeing or hearing things that others cannot see or hear; delusions or actions greatly at odds with reality or probability).
4. Stalking behavior (threatening behavior, unwanted advances or communication).
5. Inappropriate communications (e.g., threatening letters, e-mail messages, harassment).
6. Overtly suicidal thoughts (expression of a specific plan including referring to suicide as a current option or in a written assignment, statements of hopelessness, death, thoughts of burdening others, and/or not belonging).
7. Threats to harm self or others.

Q. How should I respond to a disruptive student?
Remain calm and know whom to call for assistance. Find someone to stay with the student while calls are made. See referral numbers on the front of this publication.

Remember to that it is NOT your responsibility to provide the professional help needed for a severely troubled/disruptive student. You need only make the necessary contact on their behalf.

When a student expresses a direct threat to themselves or others, or acts in a bizarre, highly irrational or disruptive way, call University Police at 911.
Helping Students in Distress
Reporting Guide for Faculty and Staff

Students in Distress
The University has developed this informational guide to aid faculty and staff in assisting students that are experiencing difficulties.

Students in Crisis
A student whose conduct is markedly bizarre, disruptive, or dangerous; verbal or physical threats, active threats of suicide.

Troubled Student
A student who appears confused, very sad, highly anxious, irritable, lacks motivation and/or concentration: may be thinking about suicide.

Potential to Harm
Self or Others

YES
NO

It is not a violation of FERPA to inform University Police, the Dean of Students Office or other consultative offices listed when reporting an incident of a student in distress.

If you are dealing with students in distress:
• Be aware of the location of the nearest telephone.
• If you are concerned for your safety or the safety of others, call 911 immediately.
• If the student is causing a disruption to the classroom or office environment but does not pose threat: Review the classroom disruption advisory on the inside of this publication.

When in doubt, call University Police 852-6111

Consultation or Questions
Campus Health Services (Belknap) .....852-6479
Campus Health Services (HSC) ..........852-6446
Disability Resource Center ..................852-6938
Housing ..............................................852-6636
PEACC  ..............................................852-2663
Administrative/Conduct
Dean of Students Office .....................852-5787
Academic Concerns
Student Grievance Officer ...........852-6102
Student Advocate ...............................852-8113

Student Care Team
Dean of Students Office ..................852-5787
https://louisville.edu/dos/faculty-and-staff
24-Hour Consultation
University Police ..............................852-6111
Crisis Information Center* ................589-4313
* Notify an appropriate University official after consultation.

Dean of Students...................852-5787
or
Counseling (Belknap)..........852-6585
Counseling (HSC)...................852-0996

Gender Based Harassment—Title IX
Policy and/or Objective
Title IX seeks to ensure equal opportunity for participation in University programs and activities for all students and employees. It prohibits discrimination based on sex and provides that no person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Concerns or Complaints
Make an oral or written complaint to the Title IX Coordinator or to another University Title IX administrator.

If you have a concern about a harassment situation,
Mr. Michael Bundick, Title IX Coordinator
1980 Arthur St., Louisville, KY 40208-2770; Phone: (502) 852-3698; email: michael.bundick@louisville.edu

Emergency 911

Response Guide for Difficult Student Situations
When responding to a difficult student situation:
• Don't personalize the situation: take a breath and look at the situation as objectively as possible.
• Maintain records of interactions. Keep notes of all relevant conversations that occur.
• Use “I” statements:
  • “I am happy to discuss the issue/area of concern, however, I do not want to speak with another adult about this matter.”
  • “I want you to know that we are here for you and I want to work with you. We need to take a step back for a minute so we can look at this situation together.”

For additional information about responding to specific difficult student situations, please visit louisville.edu/faculty-and-staff/rgdsCOPY.html

Other Resources
Suicide Prevention Training
What is QPR Training? QPR stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer -- 3 simple steps that anyone can learn to help save a life from suicide.

Request QPR Training
To request QPR Training for your department or group, please submit the online request form at https://louisville.edu/dos/suicide-prevention-training.html

Suicide Prevention Training

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