

Guidelines on Managing Classroom Behavior

University of Florida

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Both students and faculty are responsible for creating and maintaining a harmonious and cooperative learning environment that supports a spirit of inquiry and scholarly criticism. Faculty have a responsibility to address behavior in the classroom when it disrupts, prevents, or impairs a productive learning environment. Student behaviors that disrupt the classroom can undermine the ability of other students to learn and can unnecessarily burden the instructor. These Guidelines address those responses that are within a faculty member's responsibility and ability to impose.

UF's Student Conduct Code, Regulation 4.041(4)(j)(2) specifically addresses classroom behavior, and prohibits: "Classroom or other academic workplace behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor's authority or ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to benefit from the instructional program." In this sense, "classroom" can be interpreted to mean a physical location such as a lecture hall, lab, field site, etc., and also the virtual spaces created by on-line courses.

Faculty have a range of methods available to them to ensure or restore a productive learning environment, that include but are not limited to the following: outlining behavioral expectations in the syllabus; discussing expectations on the first day of class; verbally requesting that students put away newspapers, laptops, or other distractions; talking to students one-on-one after class or during office hours; requesting a disruptive student leave the classroom when the disruption impacts another student's learning environment; and filing a conduct complaint with the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution through its online portal. When exercising these methods, the instructor should use fairness, common sense, and the principle of applying the lowest form of corrective action that will successfully address the behavior.

Some methods, however, are not recommended or are simply prohibited. These include calling students out in front of their peers with the intent to shame or bully them into appropriate behavior; confiscating a student's personal property (laptop, phone, backpack, newspaper, etc.); touching or moving aggressively toward a student; placing yourself between a student and the room exit; and yelling or using profanity. These types of actions are not appropriate, may exacerbate a situation, and could even result in disciplinary action being taken against the instructor.

These Guidelines are not meant to address those circumstances where faculty or students feel physically threatened by a student, or believe that they are in danger of imminent bodily harm. In those cases, the response should be to call 911 and request assistance from UPD. The non-emergency number for UPD is 392-1111. Faculty should report a disruptive student situation to the Dean of Students Office as soon as possible.