

Handling Disruptive Behavior

What is disruptive behavior?

Essentially, determining what constitutes disruptive activity lies at the discretion of each instructor. Behaviors such as routine tardiness, speaking without being recognized, harassing instructors through email, and overt acts of violence are all examples of the range of unacceptable behaviors. According to University policies, disruptive activity is behavior in a classroom or instructional program that interferes with the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of others to profit from it. (See Article II, Section 8a of the Code of Student Conduct at www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code.)

Why don't faculty members report disruptive behavior?

Research suggests that instructors do not report disruptions because they hope for a spontaneous resolution; they fear they will not be supported by the administration; they fear it will reflect poorly on their abilities, and/or they fear retaliation. Since there has been an increase in the reporting of problems, and in many cases, in the severity of the problems, we would like to remind all faculty and instructors that the academic and Student Affairs staff are committed to ensuring that your decision will be met with support and expeditious resolution.

How do I handle disruptive activity?

Include on your syllabus:

- Guidelines and consequences regarding behaviors, attendance, and punctuality;
- Repercussions for academic dishonesty.

On the first day of class:

- Clearly state behavioral expectations and consequences;
- Discuss protocols for discussions/debates, including how to be recognized;
- State (or negotiate) what you will allow in class (gum, hats, snacks, etc.);
- Role model expected behaviors.

When it occurs:

- Remain calm and in control'
- Identify and acknowledge the issue;
- Offer a solution or recommend a continuation of the discussion after class or during office hours;
- Document the incident;
- Follow up with the student verbally and in writing. Copy the Dean of Students Office on any correspondence.

If the situation escalates:

- Dismiss the student from class or dismiss the class entirely;
- Document the incident with the Dean of Students Office;
- Notify proper authorities including the UK Police.

Remember to never raise your voice, argue with the student, threaten the student, get too close to the student, touch the student, use abusive language toward the student, or put yourself in danger!

If you have questions regarding disruptive behavior, contact Tony Blanton in the Dean of Students Office, 257-3754.