

Guidelines for Classroom Management

Disruptive Student Behavior

As an instructor, creating a positive classroom climate and setting expectations for students is *primarily* your responsibility. The way you engage students on the first day and week sends powerful messages about the level of involvement and interaction you expect from students.

Prevention: Clearly Outline Your Expectations

Many students do not know what is expected of them in college. Some students may lack basic social skills or like to test limits; others may have turmoil in their lives that they bring to their interactions on campus.

Prevention of disruptive student behavior begins with your **making a connection with each student** through eye contact and by being welcoming and encouraging. It is also critical to **clearly outline your expectations and the consequences of not meeting them in your syllabus**. **Review** this information the first day or week of the course. Even more effective, **involve your students** in adding their own **ground rules** for interacting with each other and **periodically review** these throughout the quarter.

Ask yourself, “What specific behavioral expectations do I have for students in my class?” While some instructors might not mind students eating in class, quietly texting, or having side conversations, other instructors might consider these behaviors disrespectful and disruptive. Determine which classroom behaviors are unacceptable to you and the reasonable consequences that may accompany them. Some instructors deduct points from the participation score for infractions. Below are a few examples of behavioral expectations adapted from WCC faculty.

- Respect the ideas of others and their right to express themselves. Express differences in a considerate and constructive manner. Keep a balance between speaking and listening.
- Actively contribute to class discussions by sharing comments or questions that are directly related to the topic and express interest in the course content. Avoid inappropriate comments that are disrespectful, monopolize the discussion, or are unrelated to the topic.
- Please turn off or silence cell phones prior to class. During tests, no cell phones or electronic devices allowed.
- Please make every effort to arrive to class on time. If you arrive late, please minimize the disruption to the class by taking your seat quietly.
- Please do not leave class early unless you have informed your instructor in advance.
- If you are absent, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate to obtain notes or handouts.

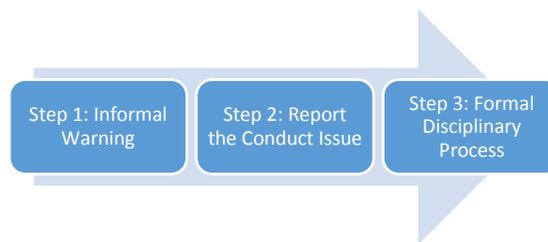
Several instructors include an excerpt from the WCC Student Rights and Responsibilities: According to the **WCC Student Rights and Responsibilities** (WAC 132U-125-003), “Enrollment in Whatcom Community College carries with it the obligation to be a responsible citizen of the college community and to treat others with respect and dignity. Each student is expected to abide by college policies and regulations along with local, state, and federal laws. The student conduct code and disciplinary procedures are implemented to support the college mission and to assist in the protection of the rights and freedoms of all members of the college community.”

Additionally, students are prohibited from engaging in any unlawful conduct. Grounds for disciplinary action include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Disorderly, abusive, or bothersome conduct. Disorderly or abusive behavior that interferes with the rights of others or obstructs or disrupts teaching, research, or administrative functions.
2. Failure to follow instructions. Inattentiveness, inability, or failure of student to follow the instructions of a college official, thereby infringing upon the rights and privileges of others.
3. Academic dishonesty including cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and facilitating academic dishonesty

Dealing with Difficult or Annoying Student Behavior

Most low-level student behavior can be prevented and effectively managed by instructors, but it is important to intervene early.



Step One: Informal Warning:*

- Ask the student to meet with you before or after class. Be sure to maintain the student's privacy rights by meeting with the student privately.
- Briefly review your classroom expectations and indicate your desire for the student to be successful in this course. Identify the specific behavior that is concerning and describe the impact it has on others. Actively listen to the student and ask for the student's ideas about solving the problem.
- Offer assistance to the student that is within your limits and professional role. Have a range of options prepared along with consequences. Summarize the actions that each of you will take.
- If the student mentions personal problems, refer the student for counseling (360-383-3080) in LDC 116, but return the focus of the discussion to your classroom expectations. (If the student needs help for an *immediate* crisis, refer the student to the Care Crisis Line 1-800-584-3578.)
- If you are not able to meet with the student privately, hand the student a written note that outlines your concerns and expectations. Since privacy is not assured with email, it is better to use the online course management system when communicating privately with a student.
- Be sure to document the conversation and the student's behavior in your personal notes. You can submit an Incident Report to document your conversation.

***Problem-Solving Assistance:** If you are uncomfortable with having this conversation on your own or you anticipate having difficulty with the student, it may be helpful to discuss your concerns with a colleague or Director for Community Standards & Residence Life. Please call the Office of Community Standards for consultations: 360-383-3074

Step Two: Report the Conduct Issue

- If the student continues to be disruptive or shows a pattern of concern, you need to contact the Office of Community Standards to initiate the student disciplinary process. **Please call 360-383-3074 to arrange a phone appointment to problem-solve the situation.**
- Although you might be reluctant to ask for assistance, this process is necessary to help you to transform difficult situations into positive learning experiences for students. It is important to notify the Office of Student Conduct about an ongoing problem because that student might also be causing problems in other classes. It is better to document smaller issues early rather than growing problems later.

Step Three: Formal Disciplinary Process

- The State of Washington has strict regulations and due process rights for all students. No matter how frustrated you may feel with a student who is disruptive, you cannot just kick a student out of the course. If a student is seriously disruptive or abusive, instructors may dismiss a student from a single class. After the class, this must be immediately reported to the Office of Community Standards.
- Although this is rare at WCC, if you believe the student is an imminent threat to your safety or the safety of others, call 911. After the police intervene, complete an [Incident Report](#) form.
- Depending on the severity and/or persistence of the behavior, the Student Conduct Officer may impose a variety of sanctions which could include disciplinary probation with specific behaviors the student must adhere to in order to remain in the class. As a team, the Community Standards staff work closely with instructors to effectively curb disruptive behaviors and a restore a positive learning climate.