

Proposal to Revise Faculty Handbook Chapter 10.5

Policy on Classroom Disruption

Rationale:

In the past several years, the Dean of Students Office has seen a notable increase in the number of faculty consultations on dealing with disruption in the classroom environment. Recent national incidents of violence in school settings have only heightened faculty concern about incidents of disruption and disruptive behavior in the learning environment, and the availability of policy, processes, and tools for addressing them.

Chapter 10.5 of the Faculty Handbook, “Policy for Dealing with Classroom Disruption”, gives faculty responsibility for managing classroom disruptions. Based on conversations with and feedback from faculty, it is clear that most faculty are unaware of this policy and, given the lack of specific tools, resources, and training, they are unable or, in some cases, unwilling, to take on responsibility for managing disruptive situations in the classroom. The policy, last updated in 2002, does not reflect our current understanding of learning environments, which go beyond the physical classroom to include virtual learning environments, studios, labs, capstones, online courses, study abroad, internships, field trips, etc.

In consultation with Faculty Senate leadership, the Provost’s Office brought together a working group of individuals with first-hand experience dealing with faculty in these situations. The working group included:

Anne Clem, senior lecturer, Accounting
 Cameron Campbell, Associate Dean, College of Design
 Amy Slagell, Associate Dean, College of LAS
 Kipp Van Dyke, Student Assistance Office
 Sara Kellogg, Student Conduct Office
 Carrie Jacobs, ISU Police Department
 E. Jacob Cummings, Equal Opportunity
 Heather Smith, University Counsel
 Ann Marie VanDerZanden, Associate Provost for Academic Programs
 Dawn Bratsch-Prince, Associate Provost for Faculty

The goal of the group was to identify ways to provide faculty with better information, guidelines, and tools so that they know how to respond when faced with disruptions in the learning environment. While no student was part of the working group, Associate Provost Ann Marie VanDerZanden did speak with Student Government leaders and share a copy of the latest draft.

The working group proposes that the Faculty Senate consider this substantial revision of FH 10.5 which is titled “Policy for Dealing with Disruption in the Learning Environment”. We believe this is a topic that merits robust faculty discussion and broad input. In addition to the proposed policy revision, the working group has developed a practical toolkit for faculty that will be made available on the CELT website by the start of fall 2018. Finally, CELT will offer regular faculty workshops on in addressing effective handling of disruptions in the learning environment starting in fall 2018.

PROPOSED REVISION

10.5 Addressing Disruption in the Learning Environment

10.5.1 Policy Statement

The university encourages all instructors to strive for free and open communication within the learning environments they oversee. All members of the university community, faculty, staff, students, and administrators, are members of an ethical team whose goal is to create an environment in which no one hesitates to speak his or her mind for fear of reprisal (FH 7.1). However, for student learning to be most effective, learning spaces must remain civil, free from intimidation, disruption, violence, bullying, and harassment.

A fundamental principle underlying university governance and academic freedom is that the faculty has the responsibility to determine the curriculum, methods of delivery, and means for assessing student performance. The general faculty discharges this curriculum responsibility through curriculum committees at the department, college, and university levels. Curricula and course descriptions are approved by the Faculty Senate and the Board of Regents, State of Iowa. Individual course descriptions in the University Catalog are the manifestation of the general faculty's expectations for the course. Faculty and course coordinators determine the exact nature of the course content, method of delivery, course policies, course assignments, classroom environment, virtual learning environment, etc., and have full responsibility to assess and evaluate student performance. Instructors have the authority to establish appropriate academic and behavioral standards to ensure a safe learning environment, free from disruption, for all students.

Student comments on the course are solicited through the course evaluation system. These evaluations are reviewed, after final grades are submitted, by the course instructor and the department chair. Students who feel they have been treated unfairly in a course may file an [Appeal of Academic Grievances](#) (see ISU Catalog).

10.5.1.1 Definitions

Learning environments shall include any gathering, in person or in virtual spaces, of instructors and students for the purposes of teaching and learning authorized by Iowa State University or any of its units. These include, but are not limited to, the classroom, online and virtual learning spaces, field trips, performances, studios, internship sites, testing centers, conferences, and office hours.

Instructor shall include all persons authorized by Iowa State University or any of its units to conduct instruction of students enrolled in the University's courses or programs.

10.5.2 Definition of disruptive behavior

Disruption occurs when the ability of the students to participate, engage, and interact within the learning environment is interrupted in such a manner as to impede the progression of the class, or the instructor's ability to lead the class is impeded and/or halted. Disruptive behavior involves physical actions, utterances, or other activities that distract, intimidate or threaten others. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Persistent interruption of others without being recognized
- The use of technology, such as cell phones, computer or other devices, without the instructor's permission

- Disrespectful actions or speech directed toward students and/or the instructor (personal insults, inflammatory comments)
- Physical threats of harm, harassment or any other statements that cause another to feel fearful or alarmed
- Refusal to comply with the instructor's request for appropriate behavior

In addition to the instructor's own observation of disruptive behavior, the instructor should take into consideration reports of disruptive behavior brought to their attention by other instructional staff, teaching assistants, or students.

10.5.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The following provides a summary of the roles and responsibilities as they pertain to potential issues of disruption in learning environments.

10.5.2.1.1 Instructor

Instructors have primary responsibility for managing the learning environment, including establishing expectations, redirection, follow-up, documentation of incidents, and contacting appropriate resources following or in the course of an incident. Instructors can obtain information from a number of offices and departments (Dean of Students Office, ISU Police Department, etc.) to help support decisions regarding a student's return to or removal from the learning environment following an incident. Instructors will consult with Department Chairs regarding suspension or removals.

10.5.2.1.2 Student

Students have certain rights as members of the university community in addition to those constitutional and statutory rights and privileges inherent from the State of Iowa and the United States of America, and nothing in this document shall be construed so as to limit or abridge students' constitutional rights. Students have the right to express themselves through academic work within the guidelines of the university rules and regulations, including those guidelines set by instructors for the learning environment. Students have the responsibility to familiarize themselves with and follow the expectations set by instructors for the learning environment. They further have the responsibility not to deny these rights to the other members of the university community. (See [ISU Student Disciplinary Regulations \[Code of Conduct\]](#))

10.5.2.1.3 Department Chair

Department Chairs receive information from instructors regarding disruptive incidents in the learning environment, as appropriate. They will be informed of and involved in consultations, decision-making, and appeals regarding student removals or suspensions from the classroom.

10.5.2.1.4 Academic Advisor

Academic advisors, including major professors for graduate students, may receive information from faculty when incidents of disruption occur. They may be contacted for consultation regarding their knowledge of individual student circumstances, or to assist the student in conversations with faculty or departmental representatives.

10.5.2.1.5 Dean of Students Office

The Dean of Students Office (DSO) may receive requests for consultation, referrals for outreach, and maintain information on student situations that rise to the level of involvement from another office. When applicable, the DSO will pass information on to the appropriate offices, and make a determination if action outside of the learning environment is required. If an issue rises to a level of significant concern for safety to the university community, as determined through threat assessment

(by ISU Police Department and in discussion with the DSO team), and significant student disciplinary charges are likely, interim action may be taken by the DSO (such as suspension or restriction from certain buildings). If no interim action is warranted, there may be an investigation by the Office of Student Conduct or Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO). As the investigation can take some time, use of course management processes outlined in this policy may be the best response.

The DSO will evaluate whether the student/s involved would benefit from an outreach (to share resources and support services, and/or discuss any relevant policies.) They will also evaluate whether the information provided constitutes a violation of the Student Disciplinary Regulations and use these processes to move forward when charges/case adjudication is appropriate (<https://www.policy.iastate.edu/policy/SDR>).

The DSO can be copied on email communication and summaries sent to the student/s to document the incident with this office (copy dso@iastate.edu).

10.5.2.1.6 ISU Police Department (ISU PD)

For instructors managing student behavior, ISU PD can be called when a situation has escalated (e.g., to assist in removing a student from the classroom or learning environment). Calling the 24-hour non-emergency line at 515-294-4428 for non-emergency issues is preferred. ISU PD can serve as a resource and often are able to mediate or de-escalate situations; the situation does not need to be an emergency or require arrest/citation to call. If an instructor has observed an assault or a direct threat of harm to self or others, calling 911 is appropriate.

ISU PD will gather information and engage in threat assessment, investigation, and make a citation and/or arrest when necessary. They will also pass relevant information on to the appropriate campus offices. ISU PD can also serve as a resource when meeting with a student that has demonstrated verbal and/or physical outbursts. Faculty can make a request (with advanced notice) for a plain clothes officer to stand by when scheduling these meetings with the student of concern (e.g., instructor or department chair confronting student behavior, sharing expectations, notifying them of their removal from the learning environment, etc.).

10.5.2.1.7 Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO)

For issues observed or reported to instructors related to sexual misconduct, sexual assault, stalking, intimate partner violence, or any discriminatory harassment as a Responsible Employee, this information must be reported to the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) (eooffice@iastate.edu). It is advised that instructors share with students, as soon as possible in their interaction, that if the student is disclosing any of these types of interaction, that university employees have an obligation to report this information. It is also advisable to share that this does not mean that the student will have any obligation or requirement to participate in any university investigation or process. It is advisable to refer them to OEO and the Dean of Students Office for additional information. Issues observed or reported to instructors related to discriminatory harassment, should also be shared with OEO.

OEO is responsible for outreach, investigations, and follow-up regarding violations of Title IX and the Discrimination and Harassment policy.

10.5.2.1.8 Student Accessibility Services

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (SAS) (<https://sas.dso.iastate.edu>) maintains documentation and supports and recommends accommodations for students with disabilities. Should a student report some issue or concern related to their disability or need for accommodations, it is appropriate to contact this office for verification or referral. Additionally, it may be beneficial to copy the Dean of Students Office (dso@iastate.edu).

10.5.3 Communicating Expectations for Student Behavior

The most important step in managing or addressing student behavior in the learning environment is to define behavior expectations at the start of the course and to communicate these throughout the semester or as needed. Many problems arise in the learning environment when there is a difference of opinion in what is acceptable behavior. A student may assume certain types of behavior are appropriate and then proceed to practice them. The instructor has the authority to define expectations and explain them to the student so that all students know and understand acceptable standards of behavior in the learning environment. The instructor may choose to include general guidelines about behavioral expectations (see [Student Code of Conduct](#)) in the course syllabus, including the expectation that students abide by ISU's [Principles of Community](#).

10.5.4 Addressing Disruptive Behavior

Should any student officially enrolled for credit in or auditing a course disrupt the instructor's ability to ensure a safe environment, control the class agenda, and/or deliver the approved curriculum, the instructor has the authority to respond to the disruption immediately and through a progression of mild to more serious steps. While a progressive approach is recommended, there are some behaviors that may require more immediate and severe action.

In resolving disruption cases, it is critical that there be appropriate documentation of the problem behavior, including time, date, brief description of the incident, and what actions were taken. This documentation should always be factual and avoid personal interjections or conjecture. If the disruption occurred online, capturing screen shots of the behavior is essential.

Although most situations are best resolved without resorting to requests for police intervention, the ISU Police Department (ISU PD) should be called when the disruptive behavior prohibits the continuation of the class. The ISU PD may also be called if any person enters or remains in the classroom after being asked by the instructor to leave.

With any level of intervention (as described below), if there is mention of any mental health concerns, including past or current thoughts of self-harm, symptoms of depression or anxiety, physical or sexual assault or misconduct, discriminatory harassment, sleep or eating disorders, disability, or substance abuse issues, the instructor should forward this information to the Dean of Students Office (dso@iastate.edu), the Office of Equal Opportunity (eooffice@iastate.edu), and/or the Office of Student Accessibility Services (<https://sas.dso.iastate.edu>), as appropriate. The DSO, OEO and/or SAS will review and determine if the information requires an outreach or additional referral, and will maintain documentation as necessary.

10.5.4.1 Mild Intervention

Mild intervention entails working with a student informally to resolve a problem. This kind of intervention is appropriate for an initial or isolated occurrence of disruptive behavior that may, or may not, be intentional. In the event of a disruption in the classroom or learning environment, the instructor should address the disruption immediately. The instructor may remind the student and the class of the expectations for behavior and why the particular behavior is deemed disruptive. The responsible

student should cease the disruption and use non-disruptive means for expressing disagreement or concern.

In resolving disruption cases it is critical that there be appropriate documentation of the problem behavior, including time, date, brief description of the incident, and what actions were taken. In the case of mild intervention, the instructor shall follow-up with the student in writing or via email to document the situation, summarizing the incident that occurred, reiterating expectations, documenting any agreement reached, and identifying consequences should the behavior continue or recur. The instructor should maintain this documentation for future reference. If the disruption occurred online, capturing screen shots of the behavior is essential. Documentation should always be factual and avoid personal interjections or conjecture.

10.5.4.2 Intermediate Intervention

Intermediate intervention entails taking formal action to address a problem. This type of intervention is appropriate for ongoing problems, an escalation of a problem, or a more serious incident in the classroom or learning environment.

The instructor should tell the student very clearly that he/she must stop the disruptive behavior immediately. If the behavior continues, the instructor will notify the student that they must leave the classroom or learning environment. If the disruptive behavior occurs in an online learning environment, the student may be restricted from online course activities for an indicated period of time.

Regardless of whether the student is asked to leave, the severity of a situation that leads to an intermediate intervention makes documentation essential. Following the incident, the student will be given a formal written notice that documents the specific disruptive behavior exhibited, including time, date, location, and description of the incident, and what actions were taken by the instructor. The documentation should be factual and avoid personal interjections or conjecture. If the disruption occurred online, including screen shots of the behavior is essential. The notice will identify any learning environment changes which may be implemented as a result of this incident, as well as consequences that may result if the behavior continues or recurs.

The student will receive a copy of the written notice, and copies will be forwarded to the chair of the department offering the course, Dean of Students Office, and the student's academic advisor. If, after receiving the written notice, the student asks to discuss the incident with the instructor, they may schedule a meeting. It may be helpful to include the Department Chair or designee when meeting with a student to discuss the disruptive behavior. This may help to reinforce the importance of behavioral expectations and to keep the conversation focused. The instructor may choose instead to have another individual present (faculty member, academic advisor, DSO, etc.). Instructors are encouraged to document in writing any communication or meeting with the student.

10.5.4.3 Emergency Intervention

Emergency intervention is appropriate when disruptive behavior threatens or endangers the physical safety or the psychological wellbeing of individuals, for example: when the instructor believes that they or another person are in immediate danger; when the instructor believes that the student is about to harm her/himself; when the instructor believes that the student is out of control and is disrupting the learning of other students.

In this situation the instructor, or someone designated by the instructor, should call ISU PD immediately at 515-294-4428 or, if an emergency, 911. The instructor may ask the student to accompany them out of the classroom, to reduce the exposure of the class to the behavior, though in this kind of emergency such a request may not be respected by the student. Written documentation following such an event is essential, including details of the incident, with time, date, location, and actions taken by the instructor. These incidents may require additional consultation with ISU PD, the Dean of Students Office, and/or the Department Chair for the course, to determine appropriate next steps. The instructor should provide written notice to the student summarizing the incident and steps taken, noting additional actions may be forthcoming. The written communication should be forwarded to the chair of the department offering the course, DSO, and the student's academic advisor.

After receiving the written notice, the student has the right to request a meeting to discuss the incident and outcomes with the instructor. If a request is made, the instructor is encouraged to include the Department Chair or designee when meeting with a student to discuss the disruptive behavior. If the incident required ISU PD response, it may be beneficial to consult with them, as well as the Dean of Students Office prior to scheduling the meeting with the student.

10.5.4.4 Voluntary Course Drop

Students cannot be involuntarily dropped from a course except as provided by an existing University policy or through the use of the student disciplinary process. Dropping a course is most appropriate when a student cannot agree to abide by the behavioral expectations set forth by the faculty member. If the student seeks to drop the course voluntarily, the student may petition their college for a late drop and/or an administrative drop that will not count against the total number of drops allowed.

10.5.4.5 Suspension from the classroom or learning environment

If, following formal written notice, a student's disruptive behavior persists, the instructor may suspend the student from class and inform the chair of the Department offering the courses. An instructor has the right to suspend a student from a single class session subsequent to the disruptive event. The instructor should clearly document the specific disruptive behavior exhibited, including time, date, location, and description of the incident, and what actions were taken by the instructor. The documentation should be factual and avoid personal interjections or conjecture. The instructor should notify the student that if they refuse to respect the one day suspension the instructor will contact ISU PD for assistance, which will result in a formal written notice and possible disciplinary action.

If suspension is sought for more than one class session, the Chair of the department offering the course must approve the request for suspension and the time period for the suspension. When the course is offered by a Program, the Program Director assumes the role of the Chair. When the instructor is an administrator, the petition for suspension should be reviewed at the next higher level of administration. The Chair of the department offering the course, or the Chair's designee, will engage in a fact-finding process in order to reach a decision on the request.

If the instructor's request to suspend the student for more than a single class session is approved by the Chair, the suspension takes effect immediately and the student, instructor, DSO, and student's academic advisor are notified in writing of the decision and the timeline for the suspension. The Chair's communication will notify the student in writing of 1) suspension from the class, 2) the reasons for suspension, 3) timeframe for suspension, 4) expectations to be met in order to return to class (see 10.5.4.6), and 5) the right to appeal the decision using the [Appeal of Academic Grievances](#) process in the ISU Catalog.

If the instructor's request to suspend the student for more than a single class session is denied by the Chair, the Chair must explain the reasons for the denial to the instructor in writing. The Chair must also ensure that resources in managing learning environments are made available to the instructor so that the instructor can manage the student upon the student's return to the class. The instructor may, however, appeal the Chair's decision to the Dean of the College.

10.5.4.6 Procedure for Students Returning to the Learning Environment

If the student is allowed to return to the classroom or learning environment, the Chair must notify both the student and the instructor in writing. Before the student may return to class, the student, Department Chair, and instructor shall meet to review expectations. The instructor must inform the student of any conditions of the return, behavioral expectations, and of opportunities to make-up missed work. Upon return to the class, further incidents of disruption by the student may be the basis for terminating the student's enrollment in the course and/or for referral to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of student disciplinary action.

10.5.4.7 Procedure to Terminate a Student's Enrollment in a Course

If the Chair decides that the student should not be allowed to return to the class or learning environment, the Chair will notify the student in writing of 1) removal from the course, 2) the reasons for removal, and 3) the right to appeal the decision using the [Appeal of Academic Grievances](#) process in the ISU Catalog. The Chair will also send written notification of the action to the Dean of the student's college, the Dean of the instructor's college, the Dean of Students, the Registrar, and the student's academic advisor. The Dean of the student's college must request that the Registrar terminate the student's enrollment in the course administratively.

10.5.4.8 Referring for Consideration of Student Disciplinary Charges

During the fact-finding process, the instructor and/or the Chair may also consider whether the conduct that led to the suspension and/or termination should be reported to the Dean of Students for review of possible disciplinary violations and subsequent charges. If disciplinary charges are filed, the student's suspension may continue pending the outcome of the disciplinary hearing (see [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#) in the Policy Library).

10.5.5 Attendance by Persons not Enrolled in a Course

The University has the right to determine who is enrolled in a course and to control the presence of any person who is not enrolled in the course. A non-enrolled person is allowed in the classroom or to participate in the learning environment only at the discretion of the instructor. The instructor should ask any non-enrolled person who attends a class against the express wishes of the instructor to leave. The instructor should ask such a person to identify themselves. If the person refuses to leave, the ISU PD may be called for assistance. If the person is a student enrolled in the university but not enrolled in the class, disciplinary charges may be filed.

CURRENT POLICY:

10.5 Policy for Dealing with Classroom Disruption

Section 10.5 was approved by the Faculty Senate on 12/10/2002.

10.5.1 Policy Statement

The university encourages all instructors to strive for free and open communication within their classrooms. However, for student learning to be most effective, classrooms must maintain a civil environment, free from intimidation, disruption, violence, and harassment.

A fundamental principle underlying university governance and academic freedom is that the faculty has the responsibility to determine the curriculum, methods of delivery, and means for assessing student performance. The general faculty discharges this curriculum responsibility through curriculum committees at the department, college, and university levels. Curricula and course descriptions are approved by the Faculty Senate and the Board of Regents, State of Iowa. Individual course descriptions in the University Catalog are the manifestation of the general faculty's expectations for the course. Individual faculty members then determine the exact nature of the course content, method of delivery, course assignments, etc., and have full responsibility to assess and evaluate student performance.

Student comments on the course may be expressed to the instructor or the Department Chair and are solicited on course evaluations. Students, who feel they have been treated unfairly, may file an Appeal of Academic Grievances (see ISU Catalog)

10.5.2 Response to Classroom Disruption

Should any student officially enrolled for credit or audit in a class disrupt the instructor's ability to ensure a safe environment, control the class agenda, and/or deliver the approved curriculum, the instructor has the right to ask that the disruptive action cease immediately. The instructor may find it useful to include general guidelines about disruptive behavior on the course syllabus; and in the event of a classroom disruption, the instructor may, if she or he finds it necessary, explain to the student and the class why the particular action is deemed disruptive. The instructor should also take into consideration complaints of disruptive behavior brought to their attention by students. The responsible student should cease the disruption and utilize non-disruptive means for expressing disagreement or concern. If the disruption continues, the instructor can pursue various forms of intervention, including suspension from class, use of student disciplinary regulations, or police intervention, as discussed below.

Although most situations are best resolved without resorting to requests for police intervention, the Department of Public Safety should be called when the disruptive behavior prohibits the continuation of the class. The Department of Public Safety may also be called if any person enters or remains in the classroom after being asked by the instructor to leave.

10.5.3 Procedure to Suspend a Student from Class Attendance

If, in the instructor's opinion, the student should be suspended from attending the class, the instructor must request the Chair of the Department offering the course to suspend the student from the class

until a decision is reached by the Chair as to whether the student will be allowed to return to the class. When the course is offered by a Program, the Director of the Program should assume the role of the Chair. Moreover, when the instructor is an administrator, the petition should be reviewed at the next higher level of administration.

If the instructor's request to suspend the student is accepted by the Chair, the suspension will take effect immediately and the student and the instructor will be notified in writing. Immediately after suspension, the Chair must investigate and determine whether to permit the student to return to the class. The Chair must provide the student and the instructor with a written statement of the outcomes of the investigation in a timely manner.

If the instructor's request to suspend the student is not accepted by the Chair, the Chair must explain the reasons to the instructor in writing for not accepting the instructor's request. The Chair must also ensure that the resources in classroom management are made available to the instructor so that the instructor can manage the student upon the student's return to the class. The instructor may, however, appeal the Chair's decision to the Dean of the College.

10.5.4 Procedure for Students Returning to Class

If the student is allowed to return to the class, the Chair must notify both the student and the instructor in writing. The instructor must inform the student of any conditions of the return and of make-up opportunities for missed work. In some cases, it may be productive to have a conference of the Chair, the instructor, and the student before the student is allowed to return to the class. Upon return to the class, further incidents of disruption by the student could be the basis for terminating the student's enrollment in the course and/or for disciplinary action.

10.5.5 Procedure to Terminate a Student's Enrollment in a Class

If the Chair decides that the student should not be allowed to return to the class, the Chair will notify the student in writing of 1) removal from the class, 2) the reasons for removal, and 3) the right to appeal the decision using the Appeal of Academic Grievances process (see ISU Catalog). The Chair will also send written notification of the action to the Dean of the student's college, the Dean of the instructor's college, the Dean of Students and the Registrar. The Dean of the student's college must request that the Registrar terminate the student's enrollment in the course administratively.

10.5.6 Filing of Disciplinary Charges

During the investigation phase, the instructor and/or the Chair could also consider whether the conduct that led to the suspension and/or termination should be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary charges. If disciplinary charges are filed, the student's suspension may continue pending the outcome of the disciplinary hearing (see Student Disciplinary Regulations in the Policy Library)

10.5.7 Attendance by Persons not Enrolled in a Course

The University has the right to determine who is enrolled in a class and to control the presence of person who is not enrolled in the class. A non-enrolled person is allowed in the classroom only at the discretion of the instructor. The instructor should ask non-enrolled person who attends a class against the express wishes of the instructor to leave. The instructor should ask such a person to identify

themselves. If the person refuses to leave, the Department of Public Safety may be called. If the person is a student enrolled in the university but not enrolled in the class, disciplinary charges may be filed.