

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 conduct 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. 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, along with the Faculty Senate Governance Council, proposes that the Faculty Senate consider this substantial revision of FH 10.5 which is titled “Policy for Addressing Disruptive Conduct 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 (<http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/effective-teaching-practices/classroom-behavior/>) by the start of fall 2019. CELT will offer regular faculty workshops addressing effective handling of disruptions in the learning environment starting in 2019.

A companion document entitled “Procedures and Guidance for Addressing Disruptive Conduct”, available at the following URL: [XXXXXX](#), is embedded in the proposed changes to Chapter 10.5. This link will contain the *Procedures* for disruption in the learning environment that complement the *Policy* in Chapter 10.5 of the Faculty Handbook; the procedures will be updated as needed as the landscape of the learning environment evolves.

NOTE: The Policy changes submitted by the Governance Council for consideration by the Faculty Senate only entail the proposed changes to the Faculty Handbook. After the second reading, we anticipate a vote on the proposed revision to the Faculty Handbook. There will not be a vote regarding the accompanying “Procedures and Guidance for Addressing Disruptive Conduct.”

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.

10.5 Policy for Addressing Disruptive Conduct in the Learning Environment

For student learning to be most effective, learning environments must remain civil, safe, collaborative, and free from conduct that unreasonably disrupts, impedes, obstructs, or interferes with the educational process. The university recognizes the importance of open inquiry, freedom of expression, and viewpoint diversity within its Learning Environments, and all members of the university—including faculty, staff, students, and administrators—should feel free to express their viewpoints without fear of reprisal (FH 7.1); however, students have an obligation to engage in the educational process in a civil manner that does not unreasonably disrupt the educational experiences of their fellow students or the instructor’s course objectives.

Conduct that unreasonably disrupts the ability of instructors to teach or students to learn can be prohibited as disruptions of university activities in violation of this policy. Instructors have the right and responsibility to ensure that a safe and functional learning environment is maintained. Importantly, instructors have the authority to address disruptive conduct. Students who engage in disruptive conduct may be subject to disciplinary action, including possible removal from a course(s) and/or referral for sanctioning under the Student Disciplinary Regulations.

10.5.1 Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

10.5.1.1 Learning Environment

A learning environment is a collaborative and safe space in which the exchange of information and knowledge occurs. A learning environment may include, but is not limited to, any gathering of instructor(s) and student(s) for the purposes of teaching and learning, particularly as authorized by Iowa State University or any of its units. Learning environments may include, but are not limited to, physical classrooms, online and virtual learning spaces, laboratories, clinical settings, course-related field trips/work, performances, studios, internship sites, testing centers, conferences, and offices / office hours.

10.5.1.2 Instructor

The classification of “instructor” includes all persons authorized by Iowa State University or any of its units to conduct the instruction of students enrolled in the university’s courses, programs, or activities. Instructors in all learning environments hold the right and responsibility to oversee the conduct of their environment and to ensure that a safe and functioning learning environment is maintained.

10.5.1.3 Disruptive Conduct

Disruptive conduct includes conduct that unreasonably interrupts, impedes, obstructs, and/or interferes with the educational process. Disruptive conduct may be physical and/or expressive in nature and may occur in person or in a virtual setting. Examples of disruptive conduct may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Persistent speaking without being recognized, interrupting, or talking over others;
- Persistent arrival to class late or leaving early without instructor permission;
- The use of technology, such as cell phones, computers, or other devices, without instructor permission, particularly in uses unrelated to course content;
- Persistent creation of loud or distracting noises either carelessly or with intent to disrupt;
- Eating, sleeping, or carrying out other personal activities in class that are unrelated to course content without instructor permission;
- Non-protected malicious or harassing or bullying speech or actions directed at instructors or students, such as personal insults, *ad hominem* attacks, name-calling, other abusive or ridiculing comments, or threats;
- Gratuitous use of cursing/expletives or other speech that is not relevant to class discussion;
- Inappropriate physical contact or threats of inappropriate physical contact directed at instructors or students;
- Refusal to comply with instructor's request for appropriate conduct.

The expression of unpopular or controversial opinions or the expression of disagreement with the instructor or other students during times when the instructor permits discussion and when delivered in a manner conducive to learning is not in itself disruptive conduct and is not prohibited. Rules regarding disruption shall be consistently and equitably applied.

10.5.2 Procedures for Addressing Disruptive Conduct in the Learning Environment

Iowa State University adheres to a progressive approach in responding to and addressing disruptive conduct in our learning environments. Instructors, department chairs, deans, and relevant administrators identified in the Resources section of this policy, work collaboratively to identify the appropriate level of intervention necessary to address the specific disruptive conduct at issue.

For important guidelines and procedures on the application of this policy, see the online Procedures and Guidelines document that has been designed to assist all members of the university community in understanding, adhering to, and administering this policy.

10.5.3 Rights and Responsibilities

The rights and responsibilities of relevant campus community members in the context of the instructor's role for addressing disruptive conduct in the learning environment are summarized below as they pertain to the application of this policy.

10.5.3.1 Instructors

Instructors have the right and the responsibility to manage disruptive conduct within their learning environments, including establishing and communicating expectations, redirection, follow-up, documentation of incidents, and contacting appropriate resources following or in the course of an incident. Instructors can obtain information and assistance from a number of campus resources (*see* 10.5.5, Campus Resources to help support decisions regarding potential violations of this policy and a student's return to or removal from a course(s) following an incident.)

The following is an example of a progressive approach for addressing classroom disruptions that an Instructor may follow depending on the particular situation: (1) direct a student engaging in disruptive conduct to cease the conduct, (2) direct a student engaging in disruptive conduct to leave the learning environment during a particular session or for a defined length of time in appropriate cases, (3) adjourn the class or activity, or (4) summon the university police in serious or emergency situations. The Resources identified in this policy and the Procedures and Guidelines have been developed to assist instructors in understanding the appropriate response(s) to incidents of disruption. Instructors will complete appropriate documentation, summarizing such incidents, and report such incidents to their department chair. Instructors will consult with their department chair regarding any student removals from courses.

In addition to the instructor's own observation of disruptive conduct, the instructor should consider reports of disruptive conduct brought to their attention by other instructional staff, teaching assistants, and students.

10.5.3.2 Students

Nothing in this policy shall be construed so as to limit or abridge students' constitutional freedoms and legal rights. In the enforcement of this policy, instructors may not infringe upon students' rights as members of the university community, in addition to those constitutional and statutory rights and privileges protected by state and federal law, including their rights to express themselves through academic work within the guidelines of the university rules and regulations or the 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 other members of the university community. (See ISU Student Disciplinary Regulations [Code of Conduct]).

10.5.3.3 Department Chairs

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 from the classroom.

10.5.3.4 Academic Advisors

Academic advisors, including major professors for graduate students, may receive information from instructors 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 instructors or departmental representatives.

10.5.4 Campus Resources

The following offices are available to assist and provide guidance to all members of the university community regarding this policy. Refer to [XXlinkXX] for the best practices and additional information regarding “Procedures and Guidance for Addressing Disruptive Conduct”. Additional resources for managing disruptive classroom conduct may be found at the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching website: <http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/effective-teaching-practices/classroom-behavior/>.

10.5.4.1 Dean of Students Office

The Dean of Students Office (DSO) is a principal resource to discuss and consult on all matters of learning environment disruption. (<https://www.policy.iastate.edu/policy/SDR>). 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).

10.5.4.2 ISU Police Department (ISU PD)

For emergencies, call 911. For non-emergency issues the ISU-PD 24-hour line—515-294-4428—is preferred over calling 911.

10.5.4.3 Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO)

The Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) is responsible for outreach, investigations, and follow-up regarding potential violations of the university’s Title IX, anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, anti-retaliation, and sexual misconduct prevention related policies (eooffice@iastate.edu). Instructors are reminded of their reporting obligations as university [Responsible Employees](#).

10.5.4.4 Student Accessibility Services

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (SAS) (accessibility@iastate.edu) determines eligibility for reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities.