

EXAMPLES OF DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

- Refusal to comply with faculty or staff direction
- Challenges to authority
- Behavior that distracts the class from the subject matter or discussion
- Persisting in speaking without being recognized in the classroom
- Repeatedly leaving and entering the classroom during class without authorization
- Loud, distracting or erratic behavior inappropriate to the setting
- Answering cellular phones or allowing pagers to “beep” in class
- Overt hostility, defiance, insults
- Verbal or physical threats to self or others
- Verbal assault or abuse (cursing or foul language)
- Sexually explicit language or behavior
- Physical intimidation
- Excessive e-mails, phone calls or demands for attention outside of class

PEAK TIMES STUDENT STRESS LEVELS MAY INCREASE

- Semester start and end
- Late October through mid-November
- Mid-March through mid-April
- Holidays

ISSUES THAT MAY INCREASE STUDENT STRESS LEVELS

- Financial or legal problems
- Pending assignments, final exams, workload increases
- Divorce, roommate or relationship conflicts
- Health issues
- Returning home for holidays

SOME TIPS FOR WHEN YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT STUDENTS

- Tell them you are concerned for them
- Know campus referral sources
- Do not be afraid to ask questions
- Know your limits and when to refer



Dean of Students Office
252 University Center
713-743-5470
713-743-5477 fax

If a student is exhibiting behavior that is perceived as directly harmful or threatening to self or others, contact University of Houston Department of Public Safety (UH-DPS) immediately at 713-743-3333 or www.uh.edu/dos.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

University of Houston
Department of Public Safety (University Police)
713-743-0600 (non-emergency)
713-743-3333
www.uh.edu/police

CAPS: Counseling and Psychological Services
713-743-5454
www.caps.uh.edu

CSD: Justin Dart, Jr. Center
for Students with DisABILITIES
713-743-5400
www.uh.edu/csd

Academic Program Management
109 Ezekiel Cullen
713-743-3965

Human Resources
Training and Development
713-743-5770
www.uh.edu/admin/hr

International Student and Scholar Services
Cross-Cultural Counseling
713-743-5065
<http://issso.uh.edu/>

SOURCE MATERIAL: Texas Tech University,
Florida International University, and the University of Houston



DEALING WITH DISRUPTIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR



UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

DISRUPTION DEFINED

The University of Houston is committed to establishing and maintaining a safe and civil environment for the teaching, learning and administrative process. Civility, understanding and mutual respect among all are intrinsic to such an environment. Occasionally, that environment is disturbed by the actions or behaviors of a disruptive nature.

The University of Houston Student Handbook defines disruption as “Obstructing or interfering with university functions or any university activity. Disturbing the peace and good order of the university by, among other things, fighting, quarreling, disruptive behavior or excessive noise, including but not limited to, a disruption by use of pagers, cell phones, and/or communication devices” (page 68).

RESPONDING TO MODERATE STUDENT DISRUPTION

Promptly address the student and his/her behavior privately in a calm, courteous and direct manner before it has a chance to escalate. Sometimes a situation is defused by offering to speak outside of the office/classroom or, if appropriate, by offering him/her a seat inside your office away from the central waiting area. This shows respect for the person’s privacy and limits disruption to others. If the disruptive behavior continues, you may ask the person for a “pause” to speak about the situation after you both have had a chance to calm down. Try not to let the student get the best of your emotions.

RESPONDING TO A HIGH LEVEL OF STUDENT DISRUPTION

When a student exhibits behavior that warrants a greater degree of intervention, address the student’s behavior immediately. Contact University of Houston Department of Public Safety (UH-DPS) if it’s necessary to have the student removed from the location. Refer the incident to your supervisor or department chair and the Dean of Students Office, and document the situation.

Collect statements from other students or witnesses who have direct knowledge of the incident or who are affected by the student’s behavior. Documentation should state clear and specific facts of the incident, describe the student’s behavior, include any direct quotes, and attach any supporting documentation (e.g., statements from other students, e-mails, etc.).

DISCIPLINARY PROCESS: REFERRING A STUDENT

If students exhibit disruptive, harmful or threatening behavior, they may be referred to the Dean of Students Office. This is especially important if the student has already received a warning about inappropriate behavior. If you have contacted UH-DPS, you will be asked to complete a written statement. It is recommended that you notify the Dean of Students and/or state to UH-DPS that you would like the student to be referred to the Dean of Students Office. If you would like to refer the student directly yourself, please document the incident and share it with the Dean of Students Office, 713-743-5470, campus mail (MC 3035).

Once a student has been referred to the Dean of Students Office, he/she is formally contacted to schedule a disciplinary meeting. During this meeting students will have an opportunity to present their perception of the incident or events. The student may choose to have the disciplinary meeting with either the Assistant Dean of Students or the University Hearing Board. If the student chooses to meet with the hearing board, you may be asked to be present and provide information. In the past, very few students have chosen the hearing board option. In either option, the inappropriate behavior is addressed, and where applicable, sanctions may be assigned that help the student correct the behavior.

Some students may be temporarily suspended prior to a disciplinary hearing in cases where the student’s conduct presents a danger to himself/herself or the university community.

The range of punitive sanctions include a written warning, disciplinary probation, suspension or expulsion.

Educational sanctions may also be prescribed and include: educational workshops (anger/ stress/ conflict management, healthy relationships), referral to counseling, projects relating to behavior, community service or restitution.

See UH Student Handbook, pages 67-71, for a full description of the student disciplinary code and policies. Student Handbooks are available in the University Center

at the Dean of Students Office, the University Bookstore and the Student Assistance and Information Center. It is also available online at www.uh.edu/dos.

PROACTIVE PREVENTION

In many situations we find out that a student has exhibited disruptive behavior across campus in different offices or residential facilities. The initial signs of disruptive behavior were ignored or overlooked. This occurs for various reasons including fear of retaliation or uncertainty of outcomes to the student. Often, the behavior was reported only after it became extreme later in the semester. With some notification to the appropriate resources, we can address the behavior with the student and involved parties before it has a chance to escalate. We cannot expect the disruptive behavior to be corrected if the student is not informed on the expectations of his/her behavior.

RECOMMENDED PREVENTATIVE MEASURES INCLUDE:

- Serving as a model by demonstrating appropriate, respectful, and responsible behavior in all interactions with students.
- Using the class syllabus to inform students in writing of standards and expectations for classroom conduct and of possible consequences for disruptive behavior.
- Devoting time during the first class to review this information in the syllabus.
- Addressing the behavior directly with the student privately.
- Documenting the situation with your supervisor or department chair and providing a copy to the Dean of Students Office.
- Contacting the appropriate resource office (s) with your concerns.

FERPA STUDENT CONFIDENTIALITY

The privacy of a student’s educational record is protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). The disciplinary record is considered part of the student’s educational record. Any information gathered while speaking with the disruptive student should be handled in a confidential manner.