

Classroom Disruption Policy

May 5, 2010

Purpose of this Policy

Northern Arizona University respects the rights of faculty to teach and students to learn while supporting the principle of freedom of expression. Maintenance of these rights requires classroom conditions that do not impede the learning process.

The University promotes a teaching and learning environment free from material and substantial classroom disruptions. The University recognizes, however, that disruptive behavior does occur and that such behavior can significantly reduce the educational experience for students. Membership in the academic community places a special obligation on all participants to preserve an atmosphere conducive to a safe and positive learning environment. Part of that obligation implies the responsibility of each member of the NAU community to maintain an environment in which the behavior of any individual is not disruptive.

This policy clarifies the definition of disruptive behavior in the academic setting and defines the actions that may be taken in response to disruptive conduct.

Disruptive Classroom Behavior

Disruptive classroom behavior involves physical actions, utterances, or other activities that distract, intimidate, or threaten others in a manner that interferes with either the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of students to profit from the instructional program. ("Classroom" and "Instructor" are defined later in this document.)

Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following types of behavior:

- Persistent interruption of others, such as speaking without being recognized
- Interference with the normal flow of teaching and learning
- The use of technology, such as cell phones, computers, or other devices, without the instructor's prior permission, to send text messages, make or receive calls, or otherwise divert attention from the topic at hand
- Disrespectful actions or speech directed toward instructors or class members, such as inflammatory comments or personal insults in oral or online discussions
- Physical threats, harassment, or any speech or actions that are considered threatening by instructors or students in the class or that place individuals at risk
- Refusal to comply with an instructor's requests for appropriate behavior
- Violations of University, college, or department policy, or policies set forth in a clinical, field placement, internship, or student teaching environment or in outside agencies working in cooperation with NAU

Note of Clarification:

1. Disruptive behavior does not include civil expression or disagreement with the course instructor or other students in the class during times when the instructor permits discussion.
2. Some disruptive students may have documented disabilities. Although such students may be considered disabled and are protected under the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, they are held to the same standards of conduct as any student keeping reasonable accommodations in mind.

Instructor Responsibilities

Instructors have the authority and the responsibility to manage their classes in accordance with University regulations. Instructors have the right and obligation to confront disruptive behaviors thereby promoting and enforcing standards of behavior necessary for maintaining an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning.

Instructors are responsible for establishing, communicating, and enforcing reasonable expectations and rules of classroom behavior. These expectations are to be communicated to students in the syllabus and in class discussions and activities at the outset of the course. Instructors may establish rules regarding the following actions and behaviors, among others: cell phone use, refusing to be seated, talking during lectures, sleeping, eating, newspaper reading, entering the classroom late, leaving early without authorization, etc.

Student Responsibility

Each student is responsible for behaving in a manner that supports a positive learning environment and that does not interrupt nor disrupt the delivery of education by instructors or receipt of education by students, within or outside a class.

Guidelines for Dealing with Classroom Disruptions

Use the following guidelines to classify disruptions and to choose appropriate action to address the disruptions.

Dealing with Minor Disruptions

If an instructor considers a student's behavior to be disruptive in a minor way, meaning that the disruption does not impede the instructor's teaching or the students' learning in any major or chronic way, the instructor, at a minimum, should discuss the behavior with the student in person, on the phone, or via a web conference. During the discussion, the instructor should reinforce the class rules and expectations for appropriate behavior and explain to the student the consequences for such disruptions as stated in the syllabus and in the Student Handbook [www4.nau.edu/stulife/handbookcode.htm]. If the student cooperates with the instructor's request to cease the disruptive behavior, no further action is required of the instructor, but the instructor may choose to report the incident to the appropriate academic administrator to establish a record of the disruption.

Dealing with More Significant Disruptions

If an instructor believes that a student's behavior is disrupting the teaching and learning process in more significant ways, for example, by becoming repetitive or more intrusive, the instructor should discuss the behavior with the student in person, on the phone, or via Web

conference. During the discussion, the instructor should reinforce the class rules and expectations for appropriate behavior and explain to the student the consequences for such disruptions as stated in the syllabus and in the Student Handbook [www4.nau.edu/stulife/handbookcode.htm]. The instructor must summarize the discussion in writing and send the summary to the appropriate academic administrator and the associate dean of the college.

Dealing with Serious Disruptions

Serious disruptions are characterized as follows:

- The problem is ongoing and persistent despite the instructor's efforts to influence, change, or stop the student's behavior

OR

- The disruptive behavior, if even a single occurrence, seriously and noticeably compromises the teaching/learning environment for students and instructors.

When confronted with serious disruptions, the instructor has the authority to refer a student to the department chair or to take other intermediate action, such as removing the student from the classroom or learning setting until an investigation is initiated. The instructor must report the incident to the appropriate academic administrator in writing who is then responsible for determining whether the incident needs to be referred to the Office of Student Life for further action. The student must also be notified in writing of the instructor's concerns that are communicated to the appropriate academic administrator. Depending on the severity of the situation, a staff member from the Office of Student Life may take further disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. [www4.nau.edu/stulife/handbookcode.htm]

Dealing with Serious Disruptions Requiring Removal of Student from Class

If a student refuses to leave a classroom or teaching location when asked to do so, or in threatening situations where an instructor is concerned about safety, the instructor should immediately contact the NAU Police Department (or other police department if the incident takes place outside the Flagstaff campus). If the student is present when the police arrive, the police will take appropriate action to remove the student and to file a report, and the instructor must report the incident to the appropriate academic administrator and the associate dean of the college. The associate dean will contact the Office of Student Life to determine appropriate Student Code of Conduct sanctions. If the student leaves the scene before police arrive, the instructor should still report the student to the police and notify the appropriate academic administrator, the associate dean of the college and the Office of Student Life to determine appropriate Student Code of Conduct sanctions.

If the student refuses to leave the classroom or teaching location when asked to do so and the instructor is concerned about the safety of himself or other students, the instructor has the authority to immediately cancel that class session.

Incidents of major disruptions or ongoing disruptions may result in involuntary removal of the student for more than one class period or permanent removal of the student from the class.

In addition, nothing in this policy shall prohibit an outside agency from terminating a student's internship, field placement, and clinical experience, or student teaching experience when that student violates the policies of that agency.

Procedure for Involuntary Withdrawal of Student from Course for Disruptive Behavior

Nothing in the policy described below prohibits a mediated process in which all parties might agree to a withdrawal; however, the behavior and the results of the mediation will be forwarded to the Office of Student Life with a copy maintained by the associate dean. If a student and instructor accept and complete a mediated process, the student will be asked to sign a document foregoing any appeal of the outcome of the mediation.

Responsibility	Action
Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before a student can be permanently removed from a class, web course, internship, fieldwork or clinical setting, the instructor must prepare a memo documenting the student’s disruptive behavior, expressing a desire to withdraw the student, and indicating a grade of “W.”• Forward the memo to the department chair or academic unit head with a copy to the appropriate associate dean and to the Office of Student Life.
Department chair or administrative equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The department chair or in the absence of the department chair, the appropriate associate dean or other designated person, will review the memo within 2 business days of receipt of memo.• The department chair, associate dean, or other designated person may require an additional meeting with the student or instructor and may also require additional documentation from the student or instructor. <p>If not approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the original memo or additional information does not support the request for permanent removal, it will be returned to the instructor within 2 business days, indicating that the student is to be allowed to remain in the class. The student will be allowed to make-up all work missed during any absence from class. <p>If approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the original memo or additional information supports the request for permanent removal, the request indicating approval will be forwarded to the Dean’s designee within 2 business days of receipt of memo.
Dean’s designee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve or disapprove the memo within 2 business days of receipt of memo. <p>If not approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Return the memo to the instructor and department chair indicating denial of the request to permanently remove the student from the course. This response must be returned to the instructor within 2 business days of receipt of the memo petitioning the request for permanent removal of the student.

If approved:

- Sign the memo to indicate approval and forward the memo to the Records Information section of the University Registrar's Office and the Office of Student Life.
- Notify the student in writing of the decision via email or in person within 2 business days.
- The dean of the college in which the course is taught or the designee of the dean is the final arbiter of classroom management issues, except that Student Life may take additional action based on review of the material.

University
Registrar's
Office

- Process the withdrawal. Retain the file copy.

If student wishes to appeal the withdrawal:

Student

- Contact the dean's office to begin the appeal procedure within 2 business days of the notification of involuntary withdrawal.
- The Dean's designee and one other individual holding a faculty appointment (not the instructor making the original withdraw request) will meet with the student within 2 business days of receiving the appeal. A recommendation regarding the withdraw will be reported in writing to the Dean, who will have final authority to accept or reject the recommendation. No appeal beyond the level of the Dean is allowed.

Related Policies

- [Student Code of Conduct, ABOR Policy 5-308](#)
- [Student Disciplinary Procedures, ABOR Policy 5-401, et seq.](#)

Definitions

1. **Appropriate Academic Administrator** is used throughout this document to signify the administrator who must be notified of disruptive classroom behavior by the instructor. This individual or position may vary between academic units. Each academic unit is encouraged to designate an appropriate academic administrator who may include the chair, associate dean, dean, program coordinator, or area coordinator. (Note that the procedure for involuntary student withdraws will require that each academic unit will need to develop a three-tiered administrative structure to process instructor requests for involuntary withdraws such that the Dean is not involved in the initial set of reviews.)
2. **Instructor** shall include all persons authorized by Northern Arizona University or any of its units to conduct instruction of students enrolled in the University's courses or programs.

3. **Classroom** shall include any gathering of instructor(s) and students for the purposes of teaching and learning authorized by Northern Arizona University or any of its units. Examples include but are not limited to the traditional classroom, web courses, televisions courses, internship/clinical/fieldwork courses, and any other teaching/learning situation in which instructors or their representatives engage in a teaching/learning environment as part of the University environment.
4. **Disruptive Classroom Behavior** involves physical actions, utterances, or other activities that distract, intimidate, or threaten others in a manner that interferes with either the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of students to profit from the instructional program.
5. **Documentation of and Authority to take Action.** Nothing in this policy prohibits the dean of a college or the Office of Student Life from taking independent actions in the removal of a student from a class; however, all actions taken by an instructor, department chair, associate dean, ad hoc review committee, or the dean must be summarized and provided to the Office of Student Life.
6. **Meetings.** Meetings between faculty and students regarding classroom disruptions should take place in person when possible but may take place on the phone, web conference, and/or other means deemed appropriate. An instructor's official communication with a student should be in writing and delivered in person or via e-mail. If a meeting is electronically recorded, the student must be notified prior to the meeting.
7. **Student** is any individual attending a class (registered or not) at Northern Arizona University.

February 24, 2010 -- AADR

March 24, 2010 – AADR

Approved:

April 23, 2010 – Academic Standards Committee

May 5, 2010 - PALC