A Faculty Guide to

addressing

Disruptive Behavior

in Class

*This guide is designed to serve as a quick reference tool to help instructors address behaviors that impact the learning environment, specifically those that occur in class. This is not intended as a comprehensive guide to the CCS Standards of Conduct for Students and related procedures.*

*Campus resources are listed on the last page of this guide.*

*First print: 2016. Updated September 2018 with new website links.*

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**Student Support Referrals (Early Alerts), Interventions and Incident Reports**

**Early Alert (Student Support Referrals)**

Student Support referrals is a mechanism for helping students who are not progressing or succeeding academically. Indicators may include irregular class attendance, poor test and homework outcomes, and students who appear not engaged in classroom activity.

Support referrals are NOT designed to handle disruptive behavior situations.

Once a referral is submitted, a Student Support Team (SST) member will attempt to contact the student. The SST member will work with the student to determine needs, and when appropriate, connect the student with a tutor, a counselor, Disability Support Services, or off-campus resources such as the Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS).

**Behavior Intervention (BIT) Reports and Threat Assessments**

When a student’s behavior causes a reasonable person to be alarmed about others’ safety; for example, threats of suicide, hearing and acting on voices in their head, threats to do harm to others, or strange or erratic behavior; an intervention may be necessary.

Submit a “BIT” report the same way you would submit a support referral. Be specific in describing what the student says or does that is the cause for concern.

Once the BIT referral is submitted, it goes directly to staff/officials on the Student Support Team who are also responsible for BIT actions. They will convene the BIT to assess the situation and make a determination on the appropriate course of action.

The student may be requested or mandated to seek counseling before being allowed to continue with courses.

*A referral for either student support or behavioral intervention can be made through the “employee portal” on the SCC website. Look for the menu on the left for:*

*Early Alert (Student Support Referral)*

[*https://scc.spokane.edu/Employee-Portal*](https://scc.spokane.edu/Employee-Portal)

**Student Conduct Information Reports (SCIR)**

When a student is suspected of having violated the Standards of Conduct for Students or has been suspended from class for disruptive behavior, fill out a SCIR.

*A report can be made through the “employee portal” on the SCC website. Look for the menu on the left for:*

*Student Conduct Incident Report - SCC*

[*https://scc.spokane.edu/Employee-Portal*](https://scc.spokane.edu/Employee-Portal)

**Disruptive Behavior**

Disruptive behavior in the classroom can be one way students act out their emotional stress and academic problems. Classroom disruption refers to behavior a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with the conduct of the class. Disruptive behaviors can range from an isolated incident of mildly annoying or irritating behavior to the more aggressive, dangerous and or violent behaviors.

Some disruptive behaviors may be due to a change in a medical or psychiatric condition. If the instructor knows or suspects that a student has a condition that is affecting their behavior, it may be beneficial to include a school counselor or Disability Support Services (DSS) staff person when meeting with the student to address the behavior.

**Unwelcome behavior may include, but is not limited, to these examples:**

* Stalking, intimidating, or harassing an instructor or other students.
* Attempting to form close attachments to an instructor(s) and, as a result, shadowing or pursuing a relationship by excessive phone calls, emails, and letters.
* Continuous attention-seeking behaviors such as asking unnecessary questions.
* Sleeping.
* Consuming food and beverages.
* Cell phone texting and social media activity.
* Arriving late and leaving early.
* Poor personal hygiene that impacts other class members.
* Threatening behavior toward an instructor or classmates.
* Talking in class without permission, talking over others, dominating class discussions.
* Verbally abusive behavior toward an instructor or other students.
* Emotional outbursts.
* Inappropriate sharing of personal information.

**Preventing Disruptive Behavior**

**Identify issues that may arise and address them in the syllabus and on the first day of class.** For example:

* Proper way to address faculty (e.g., Dr. Mr., Ms.).
* Rules regarding attendance, punctuality, late assignments, make-up exams, etc.
* Expectations for how to be recognized in class (e.g., raising a hand to be recognized).
* How to engage in civil classroom discussion.
* Standards of academic integrity (e.g., cheating and plagiarism).
* Cell phone and computer usage.
* Decorum (sleeping, eating, guests, inappropriate language, etc.).

Include a reference to the CCS Standards of Conduct for Students in the syllabus.

Establish student/instructor boundaries (office hours, appropriate and inappropriate times to contact).

After disruptive incidents, many students rationalize their interruptions by suggesting that the faculty are not available for their questions outside of class. Let students know that they will be held accountable to the information provided on the syllabus.

**Addressing Disruptive Behavior**

In addressing disruptive behaviors, there are several options below to consider depending on the severity of the student’s behavior. When a student’s behavior is such that your requests to stop are ineffective then it is necessary to escalate it to an interim suspension and the office of Student Conduct. In these situations, it will be necessary to fill out a Student Conduct Incident Report (SCIR), especially in situations when you suspend a student for disruptive behavior (See below section “Suspending a Student from Class”).

Addressing student disruption should begin with the following and progress depending on the student’s response and future behavior.

* **Verbal Request**. Inform the student, in a calm, respectful and non-threatening manner, to refrain from the behavior because it impedes your ability to teach and their fellow students’ ability to learn.
* **Verbal Reprimand**. Remind a disruptive student of the agreed upon rules defined in the syllabus and hold violators accountable for their actions. (i.e. consequences versus punishment).
* **Meet with the student outside of class**. Attempt to diffuse the situation by having the student meet with you outside of class time.
* **Suspension/Dismissal from the class**. If the situation does not immediately de-escalate, you may need to dismiss the student from class environment for 1-3 instruction days. If the student is so disorderly or disruptive that it is difficult to impossible to maintain classroom decorum, an instructor has the authority to exclude the student from any single class or program session up to three days. (Suspension from the course requires additional action by a student conduct officer.)
* **Dismiss the Class**. In situations when an out of control student refuses to leave, it may be better to dismiss the class and to call Campus Safety.

**When Meeting with a Student …**

Not addressing disruptive behavior when it occurs creates the risk of losing credibility and a learning opportunity to hold the student responsible for their actions.

**In advance of meeting with a student …**

* Prepare for the meeting by writing specific points to address.
* Invite another faculty member, staff member or administrator to attend the meeting.
* Remember that you can request Campus Safety presence.

**During the meeting …**

* Describe the behavior you observed or comments that were heard.
* Explain why you believe the student’s conduct is disrupting the classroom.
* Emphasize the desire for all students in the class to succeed.
* Remind the student of your expectations written out in the syllabus.
* Inform the student of the potential consequences if their actions continue.

**There are times when a student may try to provoke you into an argument.**

In these situations, …

* be mindful of your emotions.
* explain the potential consequences of the student’s behavior.
* dismiss the student from your office.

**After the meeting …**

* Make notes about the date, time, and location of the meeting as well as the content of the meeting. Record any main points that were emphasized, any new information that came up during the meeting, and any “next steps” that were discussed.

**Do not:**

* Audio or video record the meeting or allow a student to record the meeting.

**Submitting an Incident Report (SCIR)**

*A report can be made through the “employee portal” on the SCC website. Look for the menu on the left for:*

*Student Conduct Incident Report - SCC*

[*https://scc.spokane.edu/Employee-Portal*](https://scc.spokane.edu/Employee-Portal)

Once a report has been submitted, the system automatically forwards it to a Conduct Officer.

In completing the report …

* **Provide all pertinent information concerning the student’s actions** (verbal comments, physical gestures) and how the student’s actions impacted others. In any situation in which you feel threatened or otherwise unsafe, it is important to describe what actions by the student caused you to feel that way.
* **Do not assess and analyze.** Do not include speculations as to why the student behaved in a particular way or your personal assessment regarding the student’s mental health.
* **Describe any actions you took to address the situation, have others assist, etc.** It is extremely helpful to know if the student’s behavior has been addressed and the response you received from that interaction.

**What Then?**

You may be contacted by a conduct officer to gather more information about the incident. In cases where a student has been suspended, you may be asked to provide information about the circumstances that led to the suspension and/or conditions that should be addressed as the student returns to class. If necessary, the student conduct officer can lengthen the suspension until a meeting with the student can take place.

A formal Notice of Complaint is a summons for the student to meet with a conduct officer, student conduct board, or administrative panel.

* A student found responsible for violating the code of conduct has the right to appeal the decision.
* The Appeal Board is made up of the Vice Presidents of Student Services at SCC and SFCC.
* Sanctions can range from a verbal warning to expulsion from the college.
* Upon adjudication of the case, the student conduct officer will notify the instructor, department chair, dean, and campus safety of the determination.

**Suspending a Student from Class**

***132Q-10-500  
Classroom misconduct and authority to suspend for up to three days.***

*(3) Faculty members or college administrators have the right to suspend any student from any single class or program, up to three instructional days, if the student's misconduct creates disruption to the point that it is difficult or impossible to maintain the decorum of the class, program or the learning and teaching environment. The faculty member or college administrator shall report this suspension to the student conduct officer who may set conditions for the student upon return to the class or program.*

Consider whether a student needs to be suspended for 1, 2, or 3 days. There may be situations in which a one or two day suspension is more appropriate. For example, a student that has a rare outburst may need to only be suspended for one day rather than the full three days. An incident on a Thursday might only require a Thursday-Friday dismissal rather than extending the absence into the next week, which could escalate or prolong the disruption.

Additional steps are necessary when a student is suspended from class. A Student Conduct Officer (SCO) is required to meet with the student prior to returning to class. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss with the student classroom expectations and their willingness to abide by the instructors classroom expectations. In situations where a student continues to pose a risk to others and there is no indication the student will change their behavior, the student may be placed on interim suspension until a hearing is convened. Faculty may also ask a SCO to help communicate expectations to a student.

The student may appeal the classroom suspension to the Vice President of Student Services who would consult with the faculty member or Division Dean.

Special Note for On-line Courses:

When suspending a student from an on-line class, contact E-Learning for assistance to “block” a student from accessing course materials for the 1, 2, or 3 days. This is a manual process that must be done by E-Learning staff.

**If you suspend a student for 1, 2 or 3 days …**

* inform the student (or work with a Student Conduct Officer to have them do so) – and inform them of their right to appeal
* submit a Student Conduct Incident Report

**2020 draft. Addendum Regarding Class Suspensions**

*About the Suspension*

*A suspension from a class or program for up to three (3) instructional days is intended to serve as a separation or “cooling off” period for a student who has disrupted the learning environment. It is not intended to serve as a disciplinary sanction. Using the suspension as “the” disciplinary action would negate an opportunity to take further action. Discipline beyond the “separation,” while possible, requires separate actions and mandates additional steps of “due process” for the student.*

*Draft.*

*Restrictions during the Suspension*

*Any absences from a class; whether the class is in-person or on-line; and whether the absence is from a suspension, illness or family emergency; could result in a student missing exams or in-class assignments.*

*A suspension founded on the student’s misconduct should not come with any expectation that the student has a “right,” is “entitled” to, or should get access/credit for something that is part of the class during that time.  Their behavior has lead to this loss.*

*Draft.*

*The student should not be restricted, though, from communicating with their follow students, communicating with the instructor, from accessing course resources via Canvas, etc. just as any other student in the class (unless the restriction/suspension specifically references those areas).*

*Draft.*

*Restrictions from an On-line Class*

*CCS E-Learning has developed a mechanism to assist in suspending a student’s access to a class’ Canvas shell. This is done manually, but can be requested.*

**Campus Resources**

**Campus Safety**

Building 1, Room 147, 509-533-3333

**Counseling Services - Academic**

Academic Counseling

Building 15, Room 120A, 509-533-7026

**Counseling Services – Mental Health**

Mental Health Intern Supervisor

Building 7, Room 127, 509-533-8611

**Disability Support Services**

Building 15, 509-533-7169

[DSS@scc.spokane.edu](mailto:DSS@scc.spokane.edu)

**Student Conduct**

Lair Student Center, Building 6,

Room 125, 509-533-7431

**Title IX Coordinator**

Lair Student Center, Building 6,

Room 202A, 509-533-7015





