

15 Critical Questions Faculty Need to Ask

1

Under what circumstances can I remove a student from class?

You cannot remove a student simply because they challenge the things you say or disagree with you in class. You can, however, remove a student who disagrees if they do so by yelling or repeatedly engaging in disruptive behavior. Disruptive behavior includes constantly interrupting you or other students, repeatedly leaving and entering the classroom, making loud noises, and using physical or verbal threats. Most universities have classroom disruption policies, so make sure that whatever action you take adheres to your university's policy.

2

Do I have to let a student return to class if I don't want them there?

You cannot remove a student simply because they challenge the things you say or disagree with you in class. You can, however, remove a student who disagrees if they do so by yelling or repeatedly engaging in disruptive behavior. Disruptive behavior includes constantly interrupting you or other students, repeatedly leaving and entering the classroom, making loud noises, and using physical or verbal threats. Most universities have classroom disruption policies, so make sure that whatever action you take adheres to your university's policy.

3

Who do I call if I feel threatened by a student?

If you ever feel threatened, the first thing you should do is to get to a place where you feel safe, then contact your department chair or dean. If you feel the threat is imminent, contact public safety or the campus police.

4

Who do I call if I fear for the safety of the student who is acting out or the other students in class?

If you fear for someone's safety, your first call should be to the campus police/ public safety. Follow-up calls to the department and the Dean are also recommended. You may also want to reach out to the counseling center and the behavioral intervention team.

5

What procedures does the college have in place to address violent behavior?

Most colleges have well-developed policies intended to address violent behavior. The student handbook, faculty handbook, or the college student conduct website are all good places to look. You may also want to contact the Dean of Students if you are having a problem getting the information you need.

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How do I share my concerns about a student?

As is often the case, a report of some type will need to be filed. This report will aid other members of the university staff in getting help for the student. A report is most often a full narrative of the event that will be submitted to either the campus police/public safety, the Dean of Students office or the behavioral intervention team. Be sure to ask your department chair how to proceed, as reporting policies may vary from college to college.

7

How will the institution keep me safe if I am threatened by a student?

The college has policies that are intended to keep all members of the campus community safe. However, if you are feeling unsafe in any way you should bring your concerns to your supervisor.

8

How should I address or confront a disruptive student?

It is always best to defuse a situation before it escalates. Often simply explaining to a student that they are acting inappropriately will solve the problem. If not, pulling the student into the hallway to talk or speaking to them after class one-on-one may work. It is important to not escalate the disruption. Confronting the student in a non-threatening, respectful manner may well get the desired result.

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If I already spoke to a student about their disruptive behavior and they continue to act out, what should I do?

You may want to ask the student to leave class and meet with you outside of class to discuss the problem. It may be best to ask the department chair or a supervisor to sit in on this meeting. The goal of this meeting should be to ensure that your class will no longer be disrupted. If the student cannot agree to discontinue disrupting the class, they may be asked to drop the class or enroll in another section of the class with a different instructor. Most colleges have policies to help address this problem.

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What if the student's disruptive behavior is related to a disability?

Contact the office that works with students with disabilities to seek their assistance. In addition, if the student is requesting an accommodation for their disability, they should be able to provide the faculty member with documentation to that effect.

11

How does the institution define classroom disruption?

It is important to determine this definition as it may represent an aspect of the campus culture. Regardless, if a faculty member clearly communicates their expectations for behavior in the classroom, those expectations should be adhered to. Remember that students are provided the same rights to speech as everyone else. They are not, however, permitted to disrupt the education process.

12

What policies are in place to assist me in maintaining a civil classroom?

Most institutions have their policies published on their websites. If not, talk to your department chair or the Dean about where to find them. It is beneficial for all faculty members to be familiar with their school's policies and how to access them if needed.

13

Do I need to document all incidents of classroom disruption?

Policies will vary from college to college. It is important that faculty understand their responsibilities regarding reporting. Very often, the reporting of incidents is time sensitive. Again, speak to your department chair or Dean about what is required.

14

Can I lower a student's grade for disrupting class?

Faculty should look into both institutional policy and standard practice. Lowering a student's grade is a big step. Institutional support should be assured before this step is taken.

15

What is the most efficient and effective way for me to communicate my behavioral expectations to my students?

An excellent way to do this is to write a statement on your syllabus at the beginning of the semester that lays the groundwork for the kind of behavior you expect in your classroom. On the first day, read the statement out loud as you go over the syllabus to ensure that the students understand what is expected of them. You can also post the requirements on your website or send them out individually by email.