Resources for Supporting Students and Constructively Dealing with Student Concerns

Academic Dishonesty
Disruptive Classroom Behavior
Distressed Students: Students who may be at-risk for harming themselves or others

Contacts for Information and Assistance at Any Time
• Chair, Associate Chair, Department Manager of the Psychology Department
• Dean of Student Life Office (DOSL) (503) 725-4422 askdoslife@pdx.edu
• Campus Public Safety Office (CPSO) (503) 725-4407 cpso@pdx.edu (24 hours a day)

As an instructor, you are empowered to manage your course and your classroom in ways that allow all members of the learning community (including instructors, teaching assistants, and students) to feel safe, to teach, and to learn. In fact, you have a responsibility as an instructor to create and maintain a welcoming and respectful teaching and learning environment surrounding your courses. Most students cooperate fully in this endeavor. However, on occasion, a student interferes with this overarching goal--by obstructing your ability to teach, by disrupting other students’ ability to learn, or by behaving in ways that appear to be dishonest, threatening, intimidating, or dangerous to themselves or others. In such cases, it is your job to address these issues in a way that, while respecting the individual rights of the student, ensures the safety of our community and restores an atmosphere in your classroom that is conducive to good teaching and learning. It is the responsibility of the department and university to provide you with the resources you need to accomplish this task.

From an instructor’s perspective, incidents in which student behaviors appear to be dishonest, disruptive, or threatening are some of the most challenging and stressful situations you will encounter, and they are likely to provoke distressing emotions in the instructor, teaching assistants, and other students (e.g., frustration, worry, resentment, fear) as well as feelings of helplessness or confusion about how to handle these issues in ways that are safe, effective, honorable, and caring. In order to navigate these situations constructively, you will often need access to support and strategies. Resources are available to you through several interconnected channels. Most important is the knowledge that it is the responsibility of the department and the university to provide all instructors with support, resources, and strategies for dealing with student issues and concerns. Such incidents, because they are rare, may be new to you, but they are familiar to us. Although each situation is treated as unique based on its own constellation of factors, the university is part of a nation-wide network that has developed best practices and protocols for thinking through such incidents and strategizing about how best to approach and deal with them.

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of student behavior, you are encouraged to call or e-mail people from any of these offices. Your Department Chair is a good first point of contact, but you should feel free to contact any office at any time. The Dean of Student Life Office (DOSL) has teams in place to deal with student conduct (e.g., disruptive or dishonest behavior) and with student care (e.g., students who may be at-risk for harming themselves or others). The Campus Public Safety Office (CPSO) is available 24/7. Whoever you reach will immediately make sure that you are directed to the people who are best positioned to help you with your particular set of issues. The offices of the DOSL and CPSO are well connected to one another and frequently call on other campus resources such as Student Health and Counseling for consultation and support. We recommend that if you seek support from the DOSL or CPSO you also alert your Department Chair, as the Department Chair is ultimately responsible for making sure that your needs as an instructor are met.

Resources for instructors, including brief video tutorials on dishonesty, disruptive classroom behavior, and distressed students, can be found at http://www.pdx.edu/dos/facultystaff-resources.