

Instructional Setting Conduct Policy

Our Commitment to Academic Freedom

UMass Boston strives to create an environment of academic freedom that fosters the personal and intellectual development of all community members. As such, the University protects the rights of all students, faculty and staff to explore new ideas and to express their views. For true academic freedom to exist, acceptance of the spirit of inquiry and respect for diverse ideas and perspectives must exist in both the overall university community and in instructional settings. While the principle of academic freedom protects the expression and exploration of new ideas, it does not protect disruptive or unlawful conduct.

Expectations for Conduct in Instructional Settings

Differences of opinions or concerns related to the class should be welcomed. The challenging of viewpoints is part of the academic experience, but should occur in a manner that does not threaten any member of the learning community or the opportunity for others to learn from the instructor.

Each Instructor, meaning anyone given the authority to teach a course or grade a student, including university/site supervisors and clinical preceptors or supervisors, is responsible for managing the instructional environment, which includes creating a setting for the open exchange of ideas by all students. Each student is responsible for ensuring that his or her own behavior promotes these goals.

Learning and the associated exchange of ideas may take place in many settings, including but also beyond the formal classroom. Instructional settings include but are not limited to classrooms, libraries, group meetings, tutorials, lab sessions, office hours, and off-campus venues. Instructional settings may also be virtual, for example, email or telephone-based instruction, chat rooms, and web activities associated with courses. Disruption of the learning process will not be tolerated and may lead to disenrollment or disciplinary action.

Disruptive Behavior in Instructional Settings

Disruptive behavior in instructional settings may be defined as, but not limited to, behavior that interferes with, disrupts or obstructs the learning environment, including teaching, research, administrative activities, or other authorized functions. Disruptive behavior also includes inciting others to do any of the above. Instructors have discretion as to what constitutes disruption and are encouraged to address their concerns with the student and also speak with their Chairs about such matters. If student behavior deemed disruptive persists to the point where an instructor restricts a student from class, the case must be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students to ensure due process.

Student behavior or speech that disrupts the instructional setting or flow of instruction or prevents concentration on the subject taught will not be tolerated. Although repeated or persistent rude or uncivil conduct may become disruptive, it is important to differentiate disruptive behavior from that which is merely rude, uncivil, intellectually challenging, or provides a different viewpoint.

Disruptive conduct includes, but is not limited to:

1. The student who becomes belligerent when confronted or is physically or verbally abusive;
2. The student who loudly and frequently interrupts the flow of instruction with outbursts or interjections.

These incidents must always be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting the “Student Conduct Referral Form” found here:

https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UMassBoston&layout_id=1

In certain circumstances, the following may constitute disruptive or inappropriate conduct, dependent upon degree and context:

1. The student who fails to participate when participation is expected;
2. The student who sleeps in class;
3. The student who uses or activates mobile technology which is not conducive to the learning environment, including emitting a disruptive noise or light;
4. The student who without proper approval, persistently arrives late, takes unauthorized breaks or leaves during class or leaves early;
5. The student who continues to exhibit behaviors that the instructor has addressed and asked to cease.

These incidents may be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting the “Student Conduct Referral Form” form found here:

https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UMassBoston&layout_id=1

Recordings in Instructional Settings:

Massachusetts Law, prohibits private citizens from secretly recording others, or possessing a device with the intent to secretly record, or disclosing the contents of a secret recording.

Additionally, the Student Code of Conduct defines intrusion of privacy, as “the attempted use or actual use of electronic devices that invade a person’s privacy. This includes but is not limited to: photographing, videotaping, filming, digitally recording, or by any other means secretly viewing, with or without a device, another person without that person’s consent in any location where the person has a reasonable expectation of privacy, or in a manner that violates a reasonable expectation of privacy. Unauthorized storing, sharing, and/or distribution is also prohibited. This does not apply to lawful security or surveillance filming or recording that is authorized by law enforcement or authorized university officials. These provisions may not be utilized to impinge upon the lawful exercise of constitutionally protected rights of freedom of speech or assembly.”

Academic settings are deemed places in which there is an expectation of privacy, unless previously agreed upon. These include, but are not limited to, the classroom, labs, office hours, and instructional space.

Instructor Responsibility

Instructors at UMass Boston are responsible for maintaining an environment conducive to learning in the instructional setting. To assure the best presentation of the course material, faculty/course instructors shall determine the manner and times during which students may ask questions, request clarification or express opinions or points of view in the instructional setting.

Each instructor is responsible for developing and distributing a syllabus that defines what it means to take and pass a particular course. Instructors are also responsible for assessing performance and conferring grades in relation to the stated grading policy. Disruptive behavior may affect a student’s grade when that behavior conflicts with stated course policies and processes as the following two

examples illustrate. In a course with a lateness policy, students who are repeatedly late may see their grades affected. In a course that teaches the constructive peer reviewing of each other's work, students who persist in taking unconstructive approaches may see their grades affected.

Process:

For students who exhibit behavior that immediately endangers or seriously disrupts the establishment or maintenance of an appropriate learning environment in the physical classroom, Instructors must call the Department of Public Safety (7-1212). Additionally, students who are witnesses are also encouraged to call DPS. Disruptive students may be immediately removed from the classroom or from participation in another instructional setting, and their continued attendance or participation is subject to review before the next class meeting, or if that is not possible, within three business days.

The Instructor serves as a role model for the conduct they expect from students. In the event that disruptive conduct is occurring, the Instructor may offer general words of caution(e.g. "We have too many discussions at the moment"; "Let's all focus as a class.") Instructors should communicate with the student privately in a respectful and firm manner. A student who persists in disrupting an instructional setting may be directed to leave the classroom or other setting immediately.

One of the responsibilities of the Department Chair is to serve as an administrative leader for instructors and students who are enrolled in courses taught within the department. Instructors should inform their Chairs of students who are disruptive when the student is not responsive to the instructor's directives or the instructor is unsure how to address the student's issues. In addition to informing the Chair, disruptive behavior must be reported to The Office of the Dean of Students as described above. After reviewing the report, the Dean of Students Office will discuss the behaviors with the instructor and Chair to determine the context of the behavior as it relates to the Code of Conduct and to determine the appropriate procedures to follow. The Dean of Students will meet with the accused students formally or informally to address the behaviors. Instructors are advised to keep careful written records (or complete an incident report) regarding any incident of disruptive behavior, including dates, times, names of those present, and details of the incident. It is important to document and report disruptive conduct promptly as described above.