Establishing classroom norms sets the tone of a class, provides clear guidelines on how to behave, decreases instances of incivility, and enables students and lecturers to feel safe expressing their ideas or points of view. **Below are just a few techniques instructors have used when establishing and implementing classroom norms in their course.**

### Reflect on limits
- Decide on what you consider to be acceptable or unacceptable for classroom behavior
- Consider how you and your students may differ in what is considered acceptable or unacceptable
- Think about how you can communicate your expectations and ensure that students understand them

### Communicate expectations
- Share expectations and explain why you hold them; for example, texting might communicate disrespect to you and you may be concerned about class disruptions
- Create space in class for students to discuss in small groups; discussion prompts may include:
  - What does a productive learning environment look like?
  - What conditions are needed in order for students to feel safe participating in class?
  - What is considered acceptable or unacceptable classroom behavior?

### Implement classroom norms
- Create your own list of classroom norms and present them to the class
- Have students contribute additional items
- Have the class create their own items and decide on the list of norms as a group
- Include these norms in the course syllabus
- Present norms as a contract students must sign
- Have you and your students use norms as a tool throughout the semester; revisit them periodically to reinforce
- In the event of conflict, use classroom norms to dictate how to address difficult situations

### What can be included in classroom norms
- How to communicate
- Ways to disagree
- Behaviors to avoid
- Steps for dealing with conflict
- Consequences for unacceptable actions
- Process for giving and receiving feedback

### Sample Classroom or Group Work Norms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Everyone has the right to be heard.</td>
<td>R be Respected</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Be respectful while still being critical.</td>
<td>I to Inform others about your own opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No name calling.</td>
<td>G to have your own personal Goals and needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. One person speaks at a time.</td>
<td>H to Have feelings and to express them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Maintain confidentiality.</td>
<td>T to have Trouble, make mistakes and be forgiven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Hold yourself and each other to high standards of excellence at all times.</td>
<td>S to Select or choose whether you will meet another’s expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Have the humility to recognize that you do not know everything and that everyone can stand to improve.</td>
<td>And</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Recognize that everyone will start from different bases of knowledge.</td>
<td>Not to achieve your rights by violating the rights of others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For further information on this resource and more, please contact the CTE at:
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Some thoughts on establishing ground rules...

“All the literature on classroom management considers setting groups rules essential (Baldwin, 1997-1998; Ballantine & Risacher, 1993; Boice, 1996; Brooks, 1987; Feldmann, 2001; Gonzalez & Lopez, 2001; Nilson, 1981; Sorcinelli, 1994). Most students respond very well to them; they want to know what is expected of them. In addition, ground rules convey that you are in command and no-nonsense. Therefore, announce on the first day, especially in a large class, exactly what disruptive behaviors you will not tolerate in your course—and why. Your most convincing reason—and one that is research-based—is that such behaviors annoy the other students in the class. This conveys your goodwill. (Reiterate this reason when handling a noisy disruption)” (Nilson, 2010, p. 71).

“According to the perceptions of students, fewer violations of the rules occurred when students had the opportunity to develop their rules. Whether these behaviors were actually occurring less frequently, student perception of the classroom environment may have an important impact on the students’ classroom experiences. Feeling comfortable in an environment and having a sense of control over their experiences may enhance students’ investment in the class. An unexpected observation came from the instructor’s department chair during the semester. As part of the department evaluation process, the chair observes the instructor’s classes once during each semester. The chair commented later that the second class was noisier with more students talking among themselves during the lecture. Students in the empowered class also had more favorable attitudes toward the instructor. They rated the instructor as more courteous, more willing to answer questions and to hear different points of view, and more encouraging of classroom discussion. These perceptions may have stemmed at least partially from the first day of class when the instructor asked the class to generate its set of rules. The instructor’s announcement may have signaled to students that they were going to have a different experience, and students may have altered their perceptions of the instructor throughout the semester” (DiClementi & Handelsman, 2005, p. 20).

References and Resources:


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