

## Responding to Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom

Nazareth provides a wide range of curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities to fulfill its educational mission. While the vast majority of undergraduate and graduate students behave appropriately in these settings, some will occasionally engage in conduct that disrupts the teaching and learning environment. Such conduct may impact the integrity of the educational process or administrative activities of the College, infringe upon the rights of others, or endanger members of the campus community.

The purpose of this document is to inform faculty members about options for addressing disruptive behavior in the classroom setting. It is designed to foster and maintain a safe and secure community environment. The principles in this document apply equally to other educational settings in our campus community.

### **Disruptive Behaviors in the Classroom:**

The classroom environment must be characterized by order, civility, and mutual respect among faculty and students. Faculty often mitigate classroom misunderstandings by placing their expectations in their course syllabi and addressing expectations on the first day of class. Faculty, staff, and students must also adhere to Nazareth College's [Student Handbook](#) College Policies. The [Student Code of Conduct](#) Section I Item 5 states students may be sanctioned for "Any action that endangers a student, the College community, or interferes with or disrupts the academic process".

Examples of disruptive behavior may include but are not limited to:

- Verbal aggression
- Physical aggression
- Emotional distress
- Compromising the learning environment through excessive argument or debate
- Intoxication due to alcohol or other drugs
- Failure to comply with the directions of the instructor

### **Direct and Imminent Disruptions**

**When you believe there is a direct concern of imminent harm to you or others, contact Campus Safety by phone at 585-389-2850.** Two-way communication provides the first responders with pertinent information. You may also activate your security escort alarm. Protect yourself and your students by leaving the area as soon as possible. Information about the Security Escort Alarm, available free from Campus Safety, can be found [here](#).

### **Indirect Disruptions**

If the concern is less immediate or more generalized in nature ("I hate this class and am going to do something about it"), inform the student in clear terms that the behavior is unacceptable and must cease immediately. It may be advisable to ask the student to leave the premises or adjourn the class depending on the circumstances. If the student fails to follow your directions, contact Campus Safety at 585-389-2850 for assistance. Campus Safety is available to meet with departments or individuals proactively to assess and address safety concerns.

Less serious disruptive behaviors, such as repeatedly arriving to class late, engaging in off-task behaviors, monopolizing discussion, etc., should be addressed as they occur and may be

reported through Starfish or prompt consultation with the department chair, or program director. Violations of professional standards of conduct should be addressed within the program of study.

### **Procedure for addressing Disruptive Behaviors in the Classroom:**

When a problem arises that disrupts the classroom environment, including online, laboratory, clinical setting, and other learning spaces, it is important to deal with the issue promptly according to the following steps. Faculty should consult with their department chair/associate dean when experiencing chronic disruptive behaviors that are not resolved with a conversation with the student. There may be situations that warrant an immediate referral to Campus Safety, and/or the Student Conduct Office as noted above. Faculty should also inform their department chair when campus safety has been contacted.

**Step 1:** When a disruption in a classroom occurs, faculty should address the concern informally and discreetly, **immediately** following the disruption. Faculty should meet with the student after class or during office hours and give clear, direct notice that the behavior is unacceptable. In situations where faculty have a direct or imminent concern, Campus Safety should be contacted immediately. Consultation with the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion (VPDI) is available for faculty if they are concerned about potential bias related issues.

**Step 2:** If the disruption continues or escalates, the student must meet with the faculty member during office hours or by appointment. All reasonable attempts should be made for this meeting to take place **before the next class period** to discuss the behavior and to develop a plan to amend the behavior. Even if a meeting cannot occur prior to the next class period, faculty should document attempts at resolving the concern by e-mailing the student and department chair/program director/associate dean.

**Step 3:** If the behavior continues or escalates beyond step 2, faculty should seek a mediated resolution with the support of a department chair/program director/associate dean. Faculty should document this communication by email to the student, the department chair/program director, and/or associate dean.

**Step 4:** If mediation is unsuccessful and the department chair/program director/associate dean and faculty member determine that the behavior warrants referral to the Student Conduct Office, the faculty member should file a written complaint with the Student Conduct Office via the Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom Form (DBF). Once filled out, faculty should have their department chair/associate dean authorize the form, and send to the Student Conduct Office.

### **Documentation to support all of the steps thus far should be attached to the DBF form.**

Faculty should inform the student via email that he or she has been referred to Student Conduct Office.

### **Disruptive Behavior/Class Attendance:**

Faculty have the right to remove students from the class session in which they are being disruptive. **However, they do not have the discretion to prohibit a student from attending subsequent class sessions or the authority to expel a student permanently from class.** These interventions – interim or permanent – must be facilitated through the College's student conduct procedures in order to provide students with substantive and procedural fairness.

These matters will be determined by the Associate Vice President for Student Experience and Engagement, in close consultation with the dean, and the designated faculty representative (s).

**During An Incident and Investigation by Campus Safety and/or Student Conduct:**

1. Faculty should be as thorough as possible when communicating to disruptive students, first communicating verbally and then following up in writing.
2. When reporting incidents, only factual information should be included. Reports become a part of the student's educational record and should not include personal opinion or inferences.
3. Faculty should be prepared to collaborate with the Student Conduct Office, as well as department chair/program director or dean, and other academic services administrators to reach a solution.
4. Faculty should be prepared to be present at a College Student Conduct Board hearing if one is deemed necessary.
5. When at all possible, an accelerated investigation will be pursued in those cases that impact the student's program of study. However, an investigation will require time and faculty should make arrangements for the student to continue with required coursework during this period of time. Please contact the AVPAA if there are questions or concerns.

**Resolution of Reports or Complaints:**

In the cases resulting in a DBF, timely consultation will occur with Campus Safety and/or the Student Conduct Office about next steps. An initial inquiry will be conducted to determine appropriate follow-up, which may entail informal resolution, an interim suspension from the class pending resolution of the complaint, a full Campus Safety investigation, or other approaches deemed appropriate.

When an investigation takes place, the Student Conduct Office will review relevant investigation documentation to determine if there is cause to initiate disciplinary proceedings or pursue alternative means for resolution. Possible courses of action include but are not limited to:

1. Dismiss or take no further action as the allegation lacks grounds to pursue charges (the student conduct office will maintain a file in the event similar behavior occurs in the future).
2. Determine that the alleged conduct can be resolved through an informal student conduct hearing.
3. Determine that the alleged conduct contains grounds to believe the College's policies, rules, or regulations have been violated and charge the accused student(s) on behalf of the College, resulting in formal student conduct hearings when appropriate.
4. Direct the complaint to informal resolution or mediation, provided that all involved parties are in agreement.

Whenever possible, College officials should ensure that the student understands the impact of their behaviors on the environment and institutes corrective action that remedies the impact and addresses the behavior. Returning the student quickly to the learning environment should be a priority in all but the most serious cases. Faculty should consult with their chair, program director or dean for resources to support a student's return to the classroom.

Please Note: Academic Programs may have more stringent expectations for student conduct based upon professional standards and ethical guidelines. Students are encouraged to refer to departmental student handbooks for additional information.

**After a complaint has been resolved, the reporting party, supervisor (department chair, program director, dean), and Office of Academic Affairs will be notified that the review of the matter has been concluded. Except as noted above, additional details will not be shared due to student privacy considerations.**

**Additional Concerns and Resources:**

The topics below include information about other concerning behaviors and the resources that may be used to address them.

**Disruptive Behaviors that Cause You or Others to Be Fearful**

If you have an uneasy feeling about a student's behavior, comments, or written work that you cannot classify or articulate, contact Campus Safety at 585-389-2850 for a consultation. It's important to communicate your concerns in order to keep members of our community safe.

**Concerns for a Student's Mental Health**

If you are concerned for a student's mental health, contact staff in Health and Counseling Services at 585-389-2500 for a consultation. Some of the signs that a student *may* benefit from an appointment with one of our counselors include: poorly prepared work, especially if this is not consistent with previous functioning; increased dependence on faculty or staff members; personal hygiene changes; marked changes in mood or inappropriate and/or prolonged display of emotions. For additional information, visit [Nazareth's Counseling Services website](#).

**Strategies for addressing disruptive behaviors in the classroom:**

1. Speak with the student in private, specifically stating your reasons for concern. Mention concrete behaviors and observations rather than speculations about what the student might be thinking or feeling.
2. Listen carefully, avoiding criticism, inferences, labels, and judgment. Offer support by expressing interest in the student's experiences and feelings.
3. If you feel the student would benefit from going to Counseling Services, convey this to the student. When you do so, let them know that seeking help is courageous and that many students go to Counseling Services. Make sure to mention that counseling is both free and confidential. If the student is receptive, offer to help them call Counseling Services and assist the student in making the connection, or if time allows walk them to the Health and Counseling Center.

### Contact Information for Campus Resources

| Type of Complaint   | Action Initiated By         | Action  | Contact Person  |
|---|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Academic Dishonesty</b>  | Faculty                     | Refer to the Student Code of Conduct <a href="#">Book</a>   | <b>Department Chair, Dean of College/School or the Provost</b>  |
| <b>Diversity and Inclusion</b>  | Faculty                     | Consultation only   | <b>Lisa Durant-Jones, VPC&amp;B</b><br>585-389-2025<br><a href="mailto:ldurant4@naz.edu">ldurant4@naz.edu</a>                       |
| <b>Classroom Behavior</b>   | Faculty<br>Department Chair | Fill out the DBF Form   | <b>Student Conduct in Student Experience</b><br>585-389-2881  |
| <b>Gender based Discrimination, Including Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct</b> | Faculty<br>Student Staff    | Contact the Title IX Coordinator and fill out the <a href="#">Sexual Misconduct Reporting Form</a> . Note that you will not use the anonymous option.             | <b>Heather Sourwine</b><br>Title IX Coordinator<br>585-389-2877<br><a href="mailto:hsourwi8@naz.edu">hsourwi8@naz.edu</a>           |
| <b>Student Wellbeing/ General Concerns</b>  | Faculty<br>Student Staff    | Call or email requesting a meeting <i>Do not disclose confidential information about a student in an email.</i>   | <b>Health and Counseling Services</b><br>585-389-2500   |
| <b>Student Accommodations</b>   | Faculty<br>Student          | Direct student to the <a href="#">Student Accessibility Website to fill out the appropriate form.</a>   | <b>Erika Hess</b> Director,<br>Student Accessibility Services<br>585-389-2498<br><a href="mailto:ehess6@naz.edu">ehess6@naz.edu</a> |
| <b>Emergency/ Immediate Threat</b>  | Faculty<br>Student Staff    | - Call Campus Safety<br>- Use security escort   | <b>Campus Safety (24/7)</b><br>585-389-2850   |
|   |                             | - Go to Office (Shults lower level - 021)   |   |
| <b>Conduct Appeal</b>   | Student                     | Follow the Grounds for Appeal Process outlined in the Student Handbook and email appeal request to Associate Vice President for Student Experience and Engagement | <b>Associate Vice President for Student Experience and Engagement</b><br>585-389-2023   |