

USF System   USF   USFSP   USFSM

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**Subject:** Disruption of Academic Process  
**Responsible Office:** Academic Affairs

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## I. PURPOSE & INTENT

Disruptive students in the academic setting hinder the educational process. Although disruptive student conduct is already prohibited by the University of South Florida System (USF System) [Student Code of Conduct](#) and any person may make a direct referral regarding student conduct to the [Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities \(OSRR\)](#) at any time for a conduct review and possible university wide sanction. This Academic Disruption Regulation provides the steps an Instructor may take to immediately address a student disrupting a class or academic setting including restricting a student from class, assigning an academic sanction or other immediate sanction. This is considered an Academic process and provides for academic sanctions. An Instructor may/must make additional referrals to OSSR for a more comprehensive review and additional conduct sanctions which are considered separate from the Academic process.

## II. STATEMENT OF REGULATION

This Regulation provides a mechanism for the Instructor to ensure a positive academic environment.

Although academic discussion may include disagreement with the course Instructor during times when the Instructor permits discussion, it is not in itself disruptive behavior and is not prohibited; the Instructor sets the parameters for classroom interaction.

Some disruptive students may have emotional or mental health disorders. Although such students may be considered disabled and are protected under the Rehabilitation Act/ADA, they are held to the same standards of conduct as any student.

Misconduct occurring on premises of all institutions of the USF System which adversely affects the University community and/or the pursuit of its mission is already prohibited by the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and will be handled by those procedures.

### **III. APPLICABILITY & AUTHORITY**

The following applies to all institutions of the USF System; however, non-substantive procedural modifications to reflect the particular circumstances of each separately accredited institution are permitted. Information concerning these procedures is available through the Student Affairs Office at those institutions.

References to classroom or academic area include all academic settings (in class or in academic offices, live or online, field clinical experiences, fieldtrips and the communications forums established for academic use). References to Instructor include the course Instructor, USF faculty, administrators, and staff.

#### **A. Coordination of Process:**

1. As each process contemplated by this Regulation includes several levels of administrative or academic review, students must direct emails or correspondence only to the single designated office identified responsible for the current level of review. Student's failure to adhere to this directive such as emailing all levels of administration, multiple parties not directly involved, or tangentially involved offices may be interpreted as a waiver of the review/appeal process and a failure to follow university directives.
2. As conduct that violates this Regulation may also violate others and may result in several referrals and/or administrative review and actions, students must be aware that several offices may be contacting them such as:
  - a. The College/School/Department to address alleged academic disruption;
  - b. The [Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities \(OSRR\)](#) to address possible violation of the Student Code of Conduct;
  - c. The [Students of Concern Assessment Team \(SOCAT\)](#) to identify how to best coordinate the resources available to assist in addressing concerns.

### **IV. DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**A. Disruption of the academic process:** Disruption of the academic process is defined as the act, words, or general conduct of a student in a classroom or other academic environment which in the reasonable estimation of the Instructor:

1. Directs attention away from the academic matters at hand, such as noisy distractions, persistent, disrespectful or abusive interruption of lecture, exam, academic discussion, or general University operations; or

2. Presents a danger to the health, safety or well-being of self or other persons.

**B. Notice:** Notice will be considered final upon sending of an email to a student's official USF email address. Additional notice may be sent at the discretion of the parties.

**V. PROCESS STEPS:**

**(a) Instructor Response:**

1. If a student is disruptive, the Instructor may ask the student to stop the disruptive behavior and/or warn the student that such disruptive behavior can result in immediate academic and/or additional disciplinary action. Alleged disruptions of the academic process will be handled initially by the Instructor, who will discuss the incident with the student whenever possible. It must be noted that the Faculty Senate considers the traditional relationship between student and Instructor as the primary means of settling disputes that may arise.

2. The Instructor is authorized to ask a student to immediately leave the classroom or academic area and desist from the disruptive behavior if the Instructor deems it necessary.\* In addition, the Instructor may extend the restriction or impose the restriction after the conclusion of the class. At the time the Instructor imposes the initial restriction or extends the restriction, the Instructors are accountable for compiling and sending the scanned Academic Disruption Incident Report (details and link to Report may be found in *Section 5: Documentation and Academic Disruption Incident Report* below) by email to the student's USF email address and simultaneously, within 48 hours of the restriction to:

- a. The department chair;
- b. The Assistant/Associate Academic Dean of the College (as determined by the College);
- c. The [Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities \(OSRR\)](#) or the separately accredited institution's designated office in Student Affairs; and
- d. The student (the Academic Disruption Incident Report should include notice to the student of whether the student is permitted back in class and the conditions of that return or the duration of the exclusion).

\*If the situation is deemed an emergency that requires immediate action, the Instructor should notify the appropriate law enforcement agency as soon as possible.

3. The Instructor remains responsible for the academic sanction and communication to the student with regard to the student's ability to return to class, regardless the filing of the report to other offices (which is required to enable the USF System to comprehensively respond beyond the immediate academic authority).

- a. If the Instructor permits the student to return after the classroom incident or is restricting the student from the classroom pending resolution, the Instructor or his/her designee must email, call or notify the student in person that:
  - i. The student is excluded and for how long (may be indefinitely, permanently or undetermined pending review);
  - ii. The student has the right to request an expedited review of the exclusion within two (2) days to the Chair of the Department.

#### 4. Possible Academic Sanctions, Actions and Guidelines

a. Authority of an Instructor and the appropriate Chair or Assistant/Associate Dean's Office may result in any of the following sanctions:

- Warning to the student.
  - Voluntary withdrawal by the student from the class(es).
  - Temporary exclusion and/or permanent dismissal from the Instructor's classroom or academic area, program, or college, pending an expedited appeal.
  - Academic sanction, including assignment of a final grade. If the final determination is a dismissal from class, the grade assigned for the class will depend on the student's status at the time of dismissal. If the student had a passing grade in the class at the time of dismissal, a grade of "W" will be assigned for the course. If the student had a failing grade in the class at the time of dismissal, a grade of "F" will be assigned for the course. These grades will become a part of the student's permanent record. In addition, if the academic disruption results in dismissal from more than the classroom or academic area of the incident, this grading policy may be applied in all classes affected.
- b. The Instructor or Academic Administrator must advise the OSRR or the separately accredited institution's designated office of the final Academic Sanction as soon as possible.

#### 5. Documentation and Academic Disruption Incident Report

a. Instructors should be aware that notes of the dates, times, witnesses and details of the incidents of disruption and the impact of the disruption on those present may be important in any future proceedings which may be necessary. The Academic Disruption Incident Report may be amended or updated at any time with additional information. The OSRR or designated office in Student Affairs requires written documentation containing factual and descriptive information. All parties are entitled to see this documentation.

b. Instructors are accountable for compiling and sending the Academic Disruption Incident Report either by hardcopy or scanned, and sent by email to the student's USF email address, simultaneously, within 48 hours to:

- i. The department chair;
- ii. Dean of the College or Designee (as determined by the College);
- iii. The Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities or the separately accredited institution's designated office in Student Affairs; and
- iv. The student.

The form can be downloaded from the designated websites in the Academic or Student Affairs offices and are specifically available at:

<https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/student-rights-responsibilities/documents/academic-disruption.pdf>, or completed by way of memorandum containing the following information:

- Date of report
- Student's name
- Student's USF ID number
- Instructor's name
- Instructor's phone number
- Instructor's e-mail
- Title of course, course number and section
- Date/time/location of incident
- Detailed summary of the incident, including a description of the disruptive behavior
- Witnesses
- Action, if any, taken by the Instructor (e.g., student warned, asked to leave the class, etc.)
- Recommended course of action and reasons for this recommendation Instructor's signature

**B. Student Response (including right to review):**

1. Students must respect the immediate action taken by the Instructor. However, students do have the right to ask for a review of the Instructor's decision or recommendation.

2. Each step in this review process must be initiated within and concluded by 48 hours of the last step. A designee may review instead of the administrative officer.
3. The student may appeal the academic decision in writing to the Chair of the Department. The Chair must review the written appeal and decide if the student can return to the specific class and/or any academic setting. The Chair may consult with the student or Instructor or base the decision on the report submitted.
4. The student may appeal the Chair's decision in writing to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies or Graduate Studies or the institutional officer as appropriate) for review and decision. Any decision rendered at that point must be in writing and will serve as the final and binding academic decision of the university.
5. Students should review *Section III: Applicability & Authority* as well as *Section C: Additional Referrals and Sanctions* below with regard to the possibility of multiple reviews and the need to respect the autonomy of each.

### **C. Additional Referrals and Sanctions:**

#### 1. Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities

**Student Academic Disruptions may violate the University Student Conduct Code or possible external laws. Students will be held accountable accordingly.**

Upon receipt of the Academic Disruption Incident Report or other academic referral for disruptive conduct, the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities or designated office in Student Affairs may initiate the disciplinary process resulting in the imposition of any of the following sanctions in addition to any academic sanctions imposed (in section V(A)(4)):

- Educational sanctions to include but not limited to educational programs/classes and written assignments
- Disciplinary probation
- Provisional suspension
- Suspension
- Restriction from certain or all class(es), program, college, residence hall, or any part or all of USF System institutions.
- Expulsion

#### 2. Law Enforcement

Criminal Conduct will be handled by appropriate law enforcement agencies.

### 3. Sharing of Information

The Academic Office (Dean, Director or other Academic Office) that imposes the final decision and related sanction (if applicable) will advise OSRR of any sanctions imposed by the academic area. In addition the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities or designated office in Student Affairs will advise the Instructor and appropriate academic administrators/Instructors responsible for the student's current academic standing as soon as possible, but within two weeks of the reported incident. Only final disciplinary sanctions that affect the academic status of the student will be communicated to the Instructor(s) and appropriate academic administrators after the disciplinary process is complete.

**D. Resources:** direct phone contacts are provided as follows:

#### **USF Tampa**

##### **Urgent**

Emergency.....911

University Police, Non-Emergency.....(813) 974-2628

##### **Academic Offices**

Assistant/Associate Dean's office in schools and colleges

Department chairs and other faculty

##### **Consultation**

Center for Victim Advocacy & Violence Prevention.....(813) 974-5756

Counseling Center.....(813) 974-2831

General Counsel.....(813) 974-2131

Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities..... (813) 974-9443

Students with Disabilities Services.....(813) 974-4309

Office of Student Outreach and Support.....(813) 974-6130

## **USF St. Petersburg**

### **Urgent**

Emergency.....9-1-1

University Police, Non-Emergency.....(727) 873-4140

### **Academic Offices**

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.....(727) 873-4162

### **Consultation**

Counseling Center.....(727) 873-4422

Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities .....(727) 873-5027

Students with Disabilities Services.....(727) 873-4990

## **USF Sarasota-Manatee**

### **Urgent**

Emergency.....9-1-1

Campus Police, Non-Emergency (USFSM & NCF).....(941) 487-4210

### **Academic Offices**

Dean of Students.....(941) 359-4330

### **Consultation**

Victim's Advocate.....(941) 252-5156

Counseling Center (USFSM & NCF).....(941) 487-4254

Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities.....(941) 359-4268

Students with Disabilities Services.....(941) 359-4714

Students of Concern Assistance Team (SOCAT).....(941) 359-4714

*Authority: Art. IX, Sec. 7, Fla. Constitution; FL Board of Governors Regulations, 1.001; 1006.60, 1006.61, F.S.  
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