

## Classroom Conduct Guidance for Fall 2020

July 13, 2020

Faculty Handbook Section 9.9 Classroom Conduct describes the responsibility of an instructor (any faculty rank or graduate teaching assistant) to maintain a positive learning environment. It states:

Maintaining a good learning environment in the classroom is an important part of a faculty member's responsibility as a teacher. The teacher should endeavor to create a classroom atmosphere that is comfortable and welcoming of all students, including women and members of minority groups. Disruptive classroom conduct on the part of some students may be distracting, annoying, or intimidating to other students and should not be tolerated by the teacher. . . . Faculty have the prerogative of deciding the classroom conduct and the appropriate dress of their students as long as these actions do not infringe upon the students' rights as guaranteed in principles underlying the section in the Hokie Handbook. It is the faculty member's obligation to ensure that the classes following find a clean and orderly space."

These obligations include upholding the university's guidance for health and safety protocol under the conditions of COVID-19. Faculty should follow the Guidelines for Implementation of Public Health Measures published on May 21, 2020 [https://vt.edu/content/dam/vtnews\\_vt\\_edu/documents/IMT-public-health-approach.pdf](https://vt.edu/content/dam/vtnews_vt_edu/documents/IMT-public-health-approach.pdf) and all subsequent notifications from the university (e.g., <https://vt.edu/ready/for-students.html#hygiene>).

An essential component of classroom management is clearly stated expectations in the course syllabus for classroom behavior. All instructors should include at a minimum a statement upholding the university's Well-Being Commitment. The syllabus may include additional specific expectations such as wearing a mask or face shield, following posted classroom entry and exit protocol, and maintaining physical distancing. In some class settings, such as science laboratories, the standard operating procedures for class may be far more detailed. Faculty should consult with their department head for guidance appropriate to the learning environments in which they will teach.

If a student fails to follow syllabus expectations regarding health and safety, an instructor first should address the situation in a manner proportional to the behavior and in a non-confrontational way. The student should be directed to either meet the expectations (e.g., obtain a mask or face shield) or not return to the classroom for that class meeting.

If necessary, an instructor can then terminate the class session and should inform the academic unit chair or head of their action. GTAs should consult with the faculty supervisor for the course.

If a student causes a disruption, refuses to comply, or persists in problematic behavior in a subsequent class meeting, the instructor should consult with the Office of Student Conduct for guidance and direction.

If a student engages in behavior that could be immediately dangerous or threatening to any member of the university community, the faculty member should call the Virginia Tech Police.