Disruptive Behaviours

REMEDIATION STRATEGIES
1a. The Late Student

Strategies:

• During the first class, when talking about the rules of conduct, share your expectations with regards to timeliness at the beginning of class, after breaks and at the end of class.

• When students come in late, do not continue the class “as if nothing happened”. Otherwise, it gives them permission to continue:
  • Stop talking and wait until the student has taken their seat before continuing the class. This strategy focuses attention on the student at fault and the discomfort experienced should be enough to discourage tardiness in the future;
  • If a delay results from circumstances known to you (the student had notified you of...) or completely unexpected, a humorous remark or a simple sign of understanding will probably be more appropriate and effective.
1b. The Late Student

Strategies:

• If this behaviour is a regular occurrence, schedule a one-on-one meeting with the student to discuss the issue:
  • Check with them to see if the tardiness is justified;
  • Ask them to come up with solutions;
  • You could also ask them to:
    • Prepare their material before entering the classroom and silently move to the free seat closest to the classroom entrance door (if lateness justified);
    • Wait until the break to enter the classroom if they are late again;
    • Provide a written summary of the material covered in class during their time away.

TLSS, uOttawa; adapted from UQ Network, Classroom management, facilitator’s guide, 2011, page 51
2a. Chatty Students

Strategies:

• During the first class, identify in your rules of conduct the impact chatting has on the learning environment:
  • It conveys a lack of consideration for the instructor and the other students;
  • This behaviour impacts everyone's focus.
• Proceed in stages:
  1. Look frequently and insistently at the students involved;
  2. Stop lecturing, look at them and wait for them to be quiet;
  3. Call them to order calmly, but firmly (two or three reminders no more);
  4. Walk slowly towards them, still applying intervention 1;
  5. Remind the class of the rule of conduct, and clearly ask that the chatting stop because it is distracting to others and their learning;
  6. Split these students up or ask them to leave the room if it doesn’t stop and is a regular occurrence. Inform them that you want to meet with them after the class (within a week).

TLSS, uOttawa; adapted from UQ Network, Classroom management, facilitator’s guide, 2011, page 36
2b. Chatty Students During Small Group Work

**General strategies for the class:**

- Clearly state what you expect from everyone during the activity;
- Ask for a written summary of the work done during the activity. Students who engage in unrelated chats will generally focus more seriously on the task;
- OR, inform them that they will have to report verbally on their work through a spokesperson.

**Strategies specific to chatty students:**

- Walk around the classroom regularly. Stand close to the small group whose members are chatty. Ask them questions to help them get back into the activity;
- Consider modifying the groups in the next activity to separate chatty individuals;
- If the issue persists, consider meeting with them in your office to clarify expectations, find and agree upon a solution.

TLSS, uOttawa; adapted from UQ Network, Classroom management, facilitator’s guide, 2011, page 52
3a. People Who Share a Lot
(and who are monopolizing the group’s time)

**Strategies:**

- During the first class, highlight in your rules of conduct that you reserve the right to limit the speaking time during class to give everyone a chance to share.

- When you ask questions to the entire class:
  - Allow time for reflection before taking a response;
  - Avoid looking at talkative students in the first place (you could also maintain a physical distance);
  - Give others a chance to answer first and positively reinforce their contributions; then return to the talkative students.

- Limit the length of time students can share with the class:
  - "Liam, if I understand what you are saying correctly... (the facilitator summarizes).”
  - "Lynn, if you don't mind, I'll ask the opinion of / I'll give another participant the opportunity to share their thoughts. And if we have time, I'll come back to you.”

TLSS, uOttawa; adapted from UQ Network, Classroom management, facilitator’s guide, 2011, page 48 and from J.P. Beaudoin, formation - situations difficiles, SAEA, uOttawa, 2015
3b. People Who Share a Lot
(and who are monopolizing the group’s time)

Strategies (continued):

• Ask your students to apply the "single response technique" which consists of answering only once for a given topic of discussion until everyone has had a chance to share;
• Use the "brainstorming" technique: students take turns speaking;
• Take comments or questions according to specific criteria: ask the people in the back row, those on the left side of the room, etc.;
• If necessary, remind students of the initial rule of conduct;
• If necessary, meet with the student, discuss the issue and ask for their collaboration.

SAEA, uOttawa; adapted from UQ Network, Classroom management, facilitator’s guide, 2011, page 48 and from J.P. Beaudoin, formation - situations difficiles, SAEA, uOttawa, 2015
4. Inappropriate Comments

Strategies:

1. Listen to the comments;
2. Stay quiet a moment for effect, if necessary;
3. Specify how their statement is inappropriate;
4. Refer to the initial rules of conduct (first class, or instructions prior to the discussion or activity);
5. Ask the participant to rephrase their comment or feedback.
   - If you make it a teaching moment, you could ask the other students how they would rephrase the statement (be careful how you do it so the student at fault is not put on the spot).

For example:
“Natasha, this comment is...... I would ask you to rephrase it, please."
5a. Students Who Don’t Participate

Strategies:

• Assess the situation:
  • Are the instructions clear?
  • Is the subject too complex or does it make the students too vulnerable? (especially at the beginning of the semester – need to establish trust first)
  • Are people resistant to the concepts introduced?
  • Does the material presented meet the needs or expectations of the participants?

SAEA, uOttawa; adapted from J.P. Beaudoin, formation - situations difficiles, SAEA, uOttawa, 2015
5b. Students Who Don’t Participate

Strategies:

• Possible actions – you could:
  • Plan an ice-breaker activity;
  • Ask questions or plan an activity that is less intimidating;
  • Explain the reasons behind the activity and listen to the learners’ perspective, if applicable;
  • Explain the rationale for the concept and its impact or effectiveness, with supporting evidence;
  • If a majority of students are not participating, ask the group what is happening.

SAEA, uOttawa; adapted from J.P. Beaudoin, formation - situations difficiles, SAEA, uOttawa, 2015
6. Improper Use of Electronic Devices

**Strategies***:

- During the first class, specify in your rules of conduct the requirements for the use of laptops, tablets and mobile phones;
- Inform students about the risk of lack of attention to learning and strategies to resist temptation;
- Engage students in learning situations that give meaning to the content and promote transfer into real life situations;
- Include the use of devices in activities (e.g., searching the Internet for resources);
- Move around the classroom; this is a deterrent to disruptive behaviours;
- Create areas for using tablets and laptops (preferably at the back or on one side of the classroom). For reasons of accommodation, among others, it is not desirable to prohibit devices in the classroom;
- Offer technological breaks by allowing students to check their messages at specific times.

* To learn more, refer to [the TLSS blog on the use of electronic devices in the classroom](#).
7a. Open Critics About Your Course

**Strategies:**

- During the first class, specify in your rules of conduct your interest in receiving *constructive* feedback on the course content and format; specify the preferred way to provide this feedback (for ex.: by email, feedback survey mid-semester, suggestion box, etc.).

- Suggested response sequence:
  - Listen to the comments, ask for clarification if necessary; and take notes;
  - Analyze the comments and react with a brief answer;
  - Redirect the criticism to the group to confirm or deny the comment;
  - Describe how you will use the feedback;
  - Provide a solution immediately or by the next class, should you consider the feedback valid.

SAEA, uOttawa; adapted from J.P. Beaudoin, formation - situations difficiles, SAEA, uOttawa, 2015
7b. Open Critics About Your Course

**Strategies (continued):**

- Observe students' non-verbal communication. Start a conversation about what you see (validate and discuss).
  - Ask: "What do you think of the content presented so far?"
  - Try to clarify what the problem is, the challenge, the stakes, the need behind the criticism(s);
  - If necessary, clarify the objectives, expectations, guidelines and importance of the topic covered;
  - If necessary, adapt the content and activities.

SAEA, uOttawa; adapted from UQ Network, Classroom management, facilitator’s guide, 2011, page 39 and from J.P. Beaudoin, formation - situations difficiles, SAEA, uOttawa, 2015
7c. Open Critics About Your Course

Strategies (continued):

• If it is a one-time criticism, offer to discuss the student’s concerns with them at the break or after the class, but ask them not to disturb the group's learning any further.

• Survey the class using an online questionnaire to validate if the comments expressed are shared by the whole group. Tell students that they can express themselves freely and confidentially, without prejudice to them.

• Specify the changes you will make in the short term, for next year, or that you will not be able to make change, and explain the reasons why if possible. Reassure them that specific solutions will be provided in the near future.