

Disruptive Student Withdrawal Procedure¹

1) Overview: Central to Skidmore's philosophy is a commitment to freedom of thought, expression, and behavior. The College is also committed to providing supportive assistance to students who may be experiencing academic or personal difficulties. It is never the intention of the College to stifle debate, to discourage the expression of different and provocative points of view, to prescribe a particular behavior pattern in the classroom, or to exclude students from the educational opportunities provided at Skidmore without serious cause. Any initiative to require a student to withdraw from a classroom must reflect Skidmore's care and concern for its students' well being and for their rights and freedoms.

The College also takes seriously the responsibility of all members of a learning community to interact in a respectful and civil manner in every area of community life. Disruptive or disrespectful behavior that subverts the efforts of faculty and students to pursue the teaching and learning process cannot be sanctioned. In some extreme cases of disruptive and/or disrespectful student behavior in the classroom, it may be necessary for an instructor to request the withdrawal of a student from a class in order to insure the educational rights of other students, to protect the personal and pedagogical rights of the instructor, or to protect the personal or academic well being of an individual student.

If a very serious case needing immediate intervention arises, College officials may draw on policy and procedure already outlined in the Student Handbook, which states that "the College has the right and obligation to act upon conduct not in accord with the informing principles of the Honor Code or codes of conduct. Violations of the Skidmore Honor Code and code of conduct include...obstruction or disruption of teaching or other educational activities on the College campus or other property used for educational purposes" (page 6). If the instructor confronts an issue requiring swift attention, he or she should consult immediately with the department chair and the Associate Dean of Faculty for Student Academic Affairs (ADOF), who may recommend to the Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs that the student withdraw from, or be withdrawn from, the class. The Director of Campus Safety may be asked in these situations to interview the student and others who may have witnessed the disruptive behavior. The Director of Campus Safety also has the authority to intervene immediately in any seriously disruptive situation. If the student's withdrawal from the class is the only viable course of action, the student may be allowed to withdraw immediately with a grade of W or WF or be required to do so by the Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs.

2) Definitions of Disruptive Classroom Behavior:

- a)** The student routinely or periodically exhibits language or behavior that makes it difficult for instructional activities to continue.
- b)** The student on one or more occasions exhibits language or behavior of such a disturbing, disrespectful, or threatening nature as to make the student's return to class untenable.

¹ Draft 8/11/2003; rev. 2003-2004; approved by the Committee on Academic Standing (CAS) 9/24/2012, and by the Committee on Educational Policy and Planning (CEPP) 1/28/2013; included in the [Operating Code](#) of CAS.

3) Procedures:

- a)** Whenever the situation allows, the College will try to resolve behavioral conflicts through a deliberative process. Thus, in cases of disruptive behavior not requiring immediate intervention from the Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs and/or Campus Safety (as described above), the instructor should speak with the student privately and in a confidential setting; however, if the behavior seems threatening to the instructor, she or he should ask the department chair or program director and/or the ADOF to join the initial discussion. (Here, too, the Director of Campus Safety may be asked to aid the process.) The conversation should occur soon after the first sign of disruptive behavior, and the instructor should express clearly the difficulties caused by the student's behavior and describe the changes in behavior that need to take place. If appropriate, the instructor may recommend that the student seek help from the Counseling Center. The instructor is advised to give the student a written summary of expectations and should also retain a documented record of the student's disruptive behavior and of all interactions he/she has with the student regarding the behavior. (Instructor notes should focus entirely on the behavior itself, not speculate regarding motives or underlying causes of the behavior.)
- b)** If the disruptive behavior persists after the first conversation, the instructor should seek the advice and intervention of the ADOF and department chair or program director, both of whom can help the instructor consider alternative classroom strategies, can speak directly with the student about the situation, or can move to the procedure in (d) below. If the consulting group believes that the student behavior might still be ameliorated, the ADOF will prepare a formal letter for the student that outlines the faculty member's expectations regarding acceptable (and unacceptable) classroom behavior. The ADOF will also indicate in the same letter his/her recommendation in the event there is a recurrence of unacceptable behavior (for example, immediate withdrawal from the course). Copies of this letter will go to the instructor and the department chair or program director.
- c)** If an involuntary withdrawal seems necessary, the decision-making process will be as follows (except when, as described above, the case has required immediate intervention by Campus Safety and/or the Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs): the instructor, the department chair or program director, and the ADOF will interview the student when possible (if this has not already occurred) and make their recommendation to the Dean of Faculty & Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs (a letter from the ADOF may already be on file as a result of action in (b) above). If the chair or program director is also the instructor of the class, then a tenured, senior member of the department will join this deliberation. A recommendation for course withdrawal requires the concurrence of the instructor and one other member of the consulting team (either the ADOF or the chair or program director).
- d)** The Dean of Faculty & Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Students & Vice President for Student Affairs will determine whether the student should be withdrawn from the class or whether a different course of action is more appropriate. Under most circumstances the student will receive a grade of "W" (or a "WF" if appropriate). If the deadline has passed, CAS will deliberate on any petitions for change in status.

Addition to Skidmore's Disruptive Student Withdrawal Procedure²

4) All Off-Campus Study Programs, including Faculty-Led Programs

While all students must be mindful of how their deportment affects their peers' ability to learn, such consideration of others is particularly important for students enrolled in off-campus study programs. Such programs often require students to work together as a group to ensure both that all students can achieve the program's learning goals and that all students are safe. This property of off-campus study requires a broader definition of disruptive behavior. Behaviors that can trigger the Disruptive Student Withdrawal Procedure in an off-campus study program are—in addition to those listed in 2) above—the following:

- a)** Repeated lateness or other failure to fully attend all scheduled curricular and co-curricular activities. Lateness and absenteeism disrupt the program and jeopardize the group's and the program's ability to keep its commitments.
- b)** Serious or repeated provocative, threatening, or demeaning statements directed toward one or more members of the class, the instructor(s), or the program staff. Statements of this nature create tensions or even divisions within the group that impair the program's ability to function.
- c)** Serious or repeated disrespectful treatment of program staff, guides, transportation personnel, restaurant employees, or other service providers. Disrespectful conduct contravenes Skidmore College's values and interferes with the delivery of a successful off-campus study program.
- d)** A pattern of risky, questionable and/or unstable behavior. This consistent pattern of behavior can create stressors and tensions, disrupting the program and jeopardizing the group's and the program's ability to function as designed.

A program staff or faculty member who believes that a student's behavior fits into any of the above categories will follow as closely as possible the procedures described in 3) above. If efforts by the program staff or the instructor to persuade the student to cease the behavior are unavailing, then the staff or instructor will consult with the Director of OCSE immediately. The Director of OCSE will consult with the Associate Dean of the Faculty and the Office of Student Conduct as necessary. Possible repercussions for disruptive behavior include, but are not limited to, a written warning and, if the incident is egregious enough, removal from the program.

In the case of faculty-led programs, the instructor will contact both the Director of OCSE and the ADOF, both of whom may also consult with the Office of Student Conduct and relevant department chairs or program directors as needed. Possible repercussions for disruptive behavior on a faculty-led program include, but are not limited to, a written warning and, if the incident is egregious enough, removal from the course and program.

In all cases, the disruptive behavior will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and the incident could be further adjudicated when the student returns to campus. In all cases of removal from the program, students will return to their home city immediately at their own expense.

² Approved by CAS March 2021.