

ENssentials Quick Guide

Classroom Management

What is Classroom Management and why do I need to know about it?

Our teaching spaces at ENU whether in lecture halls, seminar rooms or practical labs, are opportunities for our students to learn and work together. With the increasing diversity of students in our teaching spaces, not to mention the ongoing challenges for our students emerging from Covid, it is becoming ever more important that we manage these teaching spaces, making our students feel welcome and safe, and ensuring that we assume responsibility for managing these spaces effectively as teachers. This Quick Guide, put together by colleagues in DLTE and Initial Teacher Education, will help you establish expectations with your students from the outset, share strategies to manage behaviour in the classroom and give you some scenarios to explore, based on real life examples.

What are the current challenges facing teaching staff and students?

Recent conversations with staff and students indicate that there is a growing divide between expectations of staff and students when it comes to behaviour in the classroom. Colleagues tell us that increasingly they observe the following issues:

- Lateness
- Eating/drinking in class

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- Students talking to, and over, each other
- Mobile device (mis)use
- Aggressive behaviour

Students have also shared some of their issues:

- Racism
- Rudeness
- Lack of clarity around coursework
- Lack of feedback on assessments

Reflection point

Do these challenges resonate with you and your colleagues, or are there additional challenges? If so, who do you talk to you about these issues, which can make teaching difficult.

What strategies can we put in place to bridge the divide?

According to Tom Bennett (2020), it is important that students feel 'secure' in the school classroom. Look at his suggestions below, do they resonate?

1. Let students know explicitly that they are welcome and wanted in the classroom.
2. Teach them that it's OK to make mistakes
3. Teach them that you want the best for them.
4. Show them that they matter by involving them.

5. Treat them with dignity at all times, even if they test you.
6. Watch the classroom at all times for rudeness, bullying, mocking or discrimination, and banish these things forever.
7. Use structured talk to guarantee that everyone has a chance to be heard.
8. Give take-up time for students to think before they respond.

Suggestions to take forward

- Be clear about who you are as teacher and that you have high expectations for engagement and what environment do you want to create? Linking across to the revised [Student Charter and Student Professional Standards](#) and talking explicitly with your students about these expectations would be useful.
- Who are your learners? What are their motivations?
- Welcome students synchronously and asynchronously
- Co-create expectations with them about behaviour in the form of a [learning agreement](#) as well as the Student Charter mentioned above.
- Hold students to account through this learning agreement
- Learn the names of your students
- Address challenges when they arise in the classroom immediately or revisit at next session
- Engage regularly and informally with students to identify issues early on
- Be explicit about how students use digital devices in the classroom

Scenarios

The following scenarios, based on real-life, are to encourage you to develop your own strategies and approaches before you start teaching so that in the heat of the moment, you can avoid a difficult conversation.

The importance of language

When managing students' behaviours, you want to **ensure that your language is direct and instructional**. You want to make **clear demands** to students and **avoid posing your instructions as questions**:

E.g. *"Can you please turn your phone off?"* - In **presenting this instruction as a question**, you are **subconsciously enabling an open-ended response**: yes or no. Also, in posing this instruction to a singular person (*"you"*), it can make a student feel targeted and create unknowing tension.

Instead, you want to pose your instruction as a demand:

E.g. *"All phones off, thank you."* - This **demand is direct and not open-ended**. There is no option for students to not follow, especially as **you have said "thank you", which implies they will** follow through the demand. Additionally, by saying *"all phones"*, you are not singling out that student but are instead simultaneously reminding all students of classroom expectations.

TOP TIP: Construct your phrases around the words *"thank you"*, rather than the word *"please"*.

When a situation in a teaching space takes place, it naturally puts stress on the member of staff involved. This isn't the best time to think about what to say in reaction to a situation, so it's good to have some micro-scripts that you have rehearsed in your head or out loud

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so that you are not trying to find the correct words to use in the heat of the moment. We have created examples of what you could say below, to deal with discriminatory language:

"Discrimination of any kind is regarded as misconduct at our university and is not tolerated in this classroom. Each person in this room deserves to feel welcome and safe, so we must all work together to ensure this."

Or

"What you have said comes across as racist/homophobic/abusive/misogynistic. I need you to know that this is serious and we will discuss it more at the end of the seminar"

Phrasing this in relation to the **student code of conduct legitimises your response**. Additionally, phrasing it as "our university" and "this classroom" **creates** a sense of community and **a common need for tolerance**. It is also important to follow up and speak to the student at the end of the class to address the issue.

Mobile phone usage

"All phones off now, thank you. We all agreed upon our classroom expectations, so we know that we should not be on our phones in this classroom"

Referring to the **classroom expectations** (that students will have helped to shape at the beginning of their programme) is effective as it is a reminder that the students are not being targeted but that this is a general rule for all, including yourself as the academic. Also, the **use of "we" does not single out students** and simultaneously **reminds all students** of the general expectations. This language also reinforces the norms that are expected in your lecture/seminar/lab etc.

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Disruptive behaviour

Often it's good to follow a general script of:

- State the student's name
- Explicitly state the behaviour that they are displaying
- State the impact of that behaviour
- Redirect the students to what they should be doing

e.g. *"Lena, Ryan, you're talking and it's disturbing the learning of those around you. I need you to focus on what I am saying."*

Intimidating/physical

"Student name, could you move back a little bit please. You're very close and it comes across as intimidating."

De-escalating students' behaviour

"Now is not an appropriate time to discuss this as it is impacting the learning of others and of yourself. We can discuss this after the lecture/seminar/lab practical." - If you feel uncomfortable speaking with the student afterwards one-on-one, you could ask that an additional member of staff be present.

Useful References and Resources

Bennett, T. (2020). *Running the room : the teacher's guide to behaviour*. ProQuest.

Carroll, J. (2015). *Tools for Teaching in an Educationally Mobile World*. Routledge.

[Blog post from A Chemical Orthodoxy on Behaviour Management](#)

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[Bennett, T. \(2020, May\), The Beginning Teacher's Behaviour Toolkit: A Summary. Tom Bennett Training. https://tombennetttraining.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Tom_Bennett_summary.pdf](https://tombennetttraining.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Tom_Bennett_summary.pdf)

Videos Resources(very school based):

[Rogers, B. \(2011\). Cracking the challenging class. Programmes 1 & 2. SAGE.](#)

[Student Charter. My Napier. https://my.napier.ac.uk/your-studies/regulations-conduct-and-safety/student-charter](https://my.napier.ac.uk/your-studies/regulations-conduct-and-safety/student-charter)

Any questions

Please get in touch with us at dlte@napier.ac.uk if there is anything you would like to discuss, or explore further in relation to Classroom Management.

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