Communicating Expectations with Students

Overview

Whether your class is face-to-face or online, it is important that your students know how classes will be structured and what they will be expected to do during and outside of class sessions. Before the semester starts, it is recommended that you reach out to your students through Canvas or email and begin to introduce them to the norms and expectations of your classroom.

Provided below is sample language for norms that you can adapt to your course. These do not include expectations for grading or for academic integrity, both of which should already be in your syllabus as part of the SPS Syllabus Template.

Overall norms and expectations

1. The classroom is a shared learning community and one where diverse experiences and opinions are valued. Please remember to be respectful at all times and to share ideas and thoughts in a non-judgmental and respectful manner. Here are some classroom norms adapted from [Carnegie Mellon's Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence](#):

   - Listen actively and attentively.
   - Ask for clarification if you are confused. Reach out to the instructor via Email or Canvas (add appropriate links). You can also reach out to one of your classmates via the Canvas site.
   - Do not interrupt one another.
   - Challenge one another, but do so respectfully.
   - Critique *ideas*, not *people*.
   - Provide supporting evidence for opinions.
   - Avoid put-downs (even humorous ones).
   - Take responsibility for the quality of the discussion.
   - Build on one another's comments; work toward shared understanding.
   - Always have your book/readings in front of you.
   - Do not monopolize discussion.
   - Speak from your own experience without generalizing.
   - If you are offended by anything said during the discussion, acknowledge it immediately.
   - Consider anything that is said in class confidential.

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Setting Norms for Group Projects

Setting norms is particularly important when students are working in groups on projects that need to be completed outside of class and even more so when students are working virtually and don't have the opportunity to touch base in person. There are many decisions to be made that, if not spoken about explicitly, can cause frustration or difficulty for team members: How quickly will they respond to emails and requests? How much flexibility in deadlines is acceptable? How often will the team meet? How frequently will they check in? You can help your students develop their group norms by providing a sample of a Group Contract for students working in groups. You could also provide a sample Group and Self-Assessment tool.