ESTABLISHING AND ENFORCING GROUP NORMS / RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Definition of Workplace Group Norms / Rules of Engagement:

“Group norms are a set of agreements about how members will work with each other and how the group will work overall. These agreed-upon behaviors allow the team to increase its collective performance through healthy debate and clarity of purpose and roles.”


Tips for Establishing and Enforcing Group Norms:

1. Make the process inclusive and collaborative
   a. Designate a specific meeting for the effort and give proper notice to all
   b. Offer opportunities for everyone to make suggestions in a manner that is comfortable to them: at the meeting (open discussion or by confidentially submitting ideas) and/or in a confidential way in advance of the meeting
   c. Determine the process for developing norms and the scope ahead of time
2. Create norms that are informed by, and not contradictory to, established university policies and procedures
3. Break the norms into measurable and enforceable behaviors (“we will all be respectful” is not as useful as “we will show respect by not interrupting one another”)
4. Stick to a handful of norms and/or prioritize to ensure that the most important issues to address will stay on people’s minds
5. Incorporate the norms into your planning for future projects and meetings (i.e.: if a norm is established that meetings will start and end on time, plan for that in meeting agendas and stick to it)
6. Create a system of mutual accountability that reduces rather than increases conflict
   a. Norms should be gently enforced (for example, everyone is able to remind one another about norms but this act should not publicly humiliate or lead to lengthy debate)
   b. Norms should be enforced in a timely manner and when relevant
   c. Remember that norms aren’t intended to replace university policies and aren’t used as a system of discipline
   d. It is normal that change takes time – encourage the group to demonstrate understanding and kindness as others adapt to change

Examples of Group Norms:

Meetings:
• We will begin and end meetings on time
• We will be present and engaged at meetings by actively listening and will exit to take care of any non-meeting business (such as looking at texts, phone calls, etc.)
• We value one another’s contributions and will allow others to speak without interruption
• We will disagree in a respectful manner by not attacking people or being dismissive of their contributions
• We will discuss problems directly and avoid using side conversations to voice disagreement

In General:
• We will show respect for one another’s time and efforts by providing adequate time to respond to requests and also by responding as promptly as is practical
• We will strive to take responsibility rather than placing blame
• When raising a concern or problem, we will also contribute possible solutions
• We will demonstrate value and respect for staff expertise by trusting their input rather than “shopping” for a different response

Resources:


