

Service Excellence

@ UWindsor

Managing Difficult Service Interactions

From time to time, students/stakeholders may behave in ways that could be described as difficult. These behaviours may be manifested because of a wide array of reasons including feeling that:

- The University has let them down
- Some part of our core service has failed them, or they perceive it has failed them
- They have been treated with rudeness, indifference
- Their integrity has been questioned

Follow the steps listed below to manage difficult service interactions:

STEP	PRACTICAL TIPS
Remain calm and in control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not take the anger/emotions of the student/stakeholder personally. Remember that feelings are never right or wrong, they are simply feelings.• Adjust your mindset and take control of your emotions.• Do not become defensive.• Learn to respond not react. Reacting is quick, thoughtless, tense and aggressive. Responding involves making a conscious decision to control your behaviour; it is calm and non-threatening.• Stay composed under pressure. We all experience stress and pressure differently.
Hear the student/stakeholder out	<p>When a student/stakeholder is upset, they want to vent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage them to tell you the situation. Listen actively. Use non-verbal encouragers (e.g. nod of the head or positive facial expressions) and minimal verbal responses.• Do not interrupt or try to placate them while they are venting by saying: “<i>calm down</i>”, “<i>it is not our policy</i>”, “<i>I cannot</i>”.• Do not start addressing the concern until you have listened, heard and understood the issue from the student/stakeholder’s perspective.



Service Excellence Vision

Together, we foster a culture of success and support by making every interaction an exceptional experience.

For more information go to www.uwindsor.ca/serviceexcellence



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STEP	PRACTICAL TIPS
Acknowledge the student/stakeholder's feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A student/stakeholder needs to feel that you care and that you fully understand the situation. • When the student/stakeholder finishes sharing their perspective, acknowledge the student/stakeholder's feelings (e.g. frustration, anger, etc.) and demonstrate empathy. This does not mean that you agree with the person, it acknowledges that you recognize their feelings. Use phrases such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o "I can see why you feel that way" o "That must be very upsetting" o "I understand how frustrating this might be" • Use their name and communicate your desire to do all you can to resolve the issue. • When appropriate, apologize for the situation. Apologizing demonstrates respect. It does not mean agreement or that you take blame for the situation.
Summarize and ask for confirmation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paraphrase what the student/stakeholder said and ask for confirmation. • It shows the student/stakeholder that you listened and understood the issue. It also gives the student/stakeholder an opportunity to clarify/expand. • If you need more details, ask open-ended questions (e.g. "Tell me more...", "Help me understand...").
Begin to problem solve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure the student/stakeholder that you want to help. • Describe what you can do and any limitations. • Provide alternatives if possible. • Agree on a solution and summarize next steps. • Do not make promises that you cannot fulfill and follow-thru on agreed upon actions. • Contact your supervisor if higher authority is needed to resolve the issue. Provide your supervisor the background information so that the student/stakeholder does not have to repeat what they shared with you.

KNOW WHEN TO STOP THE INTERACTION

- Providing good service does not mean that you have to be subject to disrespectful behavior (e.g. verbal abuse, offensive language, yelling).
- Ask the student/stakeholder to stop the behavior (e.g. "I apologize Ms. Lee but if you continue to use this language, I will be forced to end this call/ask you to leave").
- If you feel that a situation could become violent:
 - o Immediately terminate the interaction
 - o Walk away and get help
 - o Alert your supervisor

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

After a stressful service interaction, take the time to compose yourself. The following are some strategies:

- Do some deep breathing exercises
- Go for a brief walk/stretch
- Drink some water
- Talk to your supervisor or a colleague
- Think about what you did well and what you may want to do differently in the future

Violence Prevention

The University of Windsor is committed to providing a safe learning and work environment and maintaining a workplace that is violence free. Review the Violence Prevention Policy and resources: www.uwindsor.ca/safety.