

HOW TO HELP A STUDENT OF CONCERN

A GUIDE FOR FACULTY AND STAFF



El Centro College

DALLAS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

Student Services and Enrollment Management Division

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Part I – Introduction

El Centro College (ECC) is committed to the health and safety of all members of our community. To safeguard our community, the CARE TEAM has developed a comprehensive reporting system to share appropriate information so students can receive or stay connected to the academic support and student health services they need. This reporting system is one element of a safe and supportive campus community.

This guide is designed as a reference and resource for faculty and staff members and to support the training efforts of El Centro College. It specifically provides faculty and staff with information about how to seek assistance and report behaviors of concern. Additional information is provided about managing difficult situations, behavioral signs that warrant concern, as well as resources for assisting students in accessing resources and services at El Centro College.

Responding to Students of Concern

Within the academic setting various manifestations of student behavior can cause great concern to faculty and staff. The purpose of this guide is to provide faculty and staff with basic tools to respond to these concerns.

- Part I (this section) includes general guidelines for responding to students, El Centro College resources and documentation procedures.
- Part II includes strategies for dealing with **disruptive** students in the classroom and in other work environments– on campus, or in the online environment.
- Part III includes a brief description of **behavior patterns**, suggestions for appropriate responses, and decision trees for specific interventions.

The decision trees and information are designed to assist you in formulating a plan of action based on the student’s behavior and to identify campus resources that can assist you. **It is important to note that El Centro College does not expect you to assume the role of counselor, therapist or police officer.** For those responsibilities, El Centro College has trained professionals who are ready to assist you with students who are of concern to you.

In situations, when a student is severely impaired or potentially dangerous, El Centro College Campus Police will need to be alerted. Campus Police is also available to assist individual departments in formulating their own safety plans in accordance with their physical layout, degree, and nature of student contact and role within El Centro College.

Faculty and staff can play an invaluable role in helping students who are in distress. Your expression of interest, concern, and compassion is an important factor toward a student seeking the assistance they need. The CARE TEAM, Student Counseling Center, Disability Services Office (DSO), Health Center, Campus Police and administrators stand ready to assist you. We hope this

guide will help you to identify a potentially difficult situation and provide you with specific ideas and resources when you encounter student behaviors that are of concern.

We encourage faculty and staff to document incidents using the online **Incident Reporting Form** https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?DallasCountyCCD&layout_id=10. Note that a student will have a right to see the **Incident Reporting Form**. Potential interventions will be determined on a case-by-case basis. It is important to recognize that dealing with disruptive or distressed students can be psychologically and emotionally difficult. Consequently, it can be very helpful to discuss these issues with a supervisor or seek professional assistance through the Human Resources department.

Resources for Students

El Centro College provides many services to support academic and personal success. A brief conversation with a student in which you point him or her in the right direction can sometimes be sufficient to reduce stress. The Division of Student Services and Enrollment Management offers a wide variety of support services including:

Faculty Counselors

El Centro College Faculty Counselors are available to help current students with personal, career and academic concerns that affect academic success and quality of life.

- Academic Transfer: Roger Copeland, 214-860-2080, rcopeland@dcccd.edu
- Business Design and Public Service: Rosalinda Minnis, 214-860-2074, rminnis@dcccd.edu
- Health and Legal Careers: Vicki Wood, 972-860-5045, vickiwood@dcccd.edu
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM): Valerie Crow-McDowell, 214-860-2692, vcrow@dcccd.edu

Student Counseling Center (214-860-2113)

Professional Counselors specialize in dealing with the problems commonly experienced by college students of all ages and collaborate with the student to increase self-understanding and develop the skills necessary to overcome personal concerns. The Student Counseling Center reception area is located in the A building, room A-270 (inside the Health Center).

Health Center (214-860-2113)

The Health Center provides prevention and education opportunities in an affordable, quality health care setting that is accessible and cost effective to El Centro College students. The Health Center is located in the A building, room A-270.

Learning Center (214-860-2133)

The Learning Center provides supplemental instruction, tutoring, workshops, and technology resources that support learning by teaching strategies that help increase students' understanding of course content and by introducing and polishing study skills that improve their performance. The Learning Center is located in the A building, room A-350.

Disability Services Office (DSO) (214-860-2411)

The DSO provides programs and services for students who experience disabilities, including assistance with college learning through recommended academic adjustments, auxiliary services, and advocacy. Students wishing support must register with the DSO and provide recent and appropriate documentation. DSO is located in the A building, B level, room B-095.

Adult Resource Center (ARC) (214-860-2128)

The Adult Resource Center prepares and supports enrolled students at El Centro College who are single parents or who have become severely financially disadvantaged due to life circumstances. Services include, child care assistance, textbook lending, emergency loans, Adopt an Angel (Holiday gift assistance), single parent workshops, and community resource referrals. The ARC is located in the A building, B level, room A-095

Multicultural Center (214-860-2090)

The Multicultural Center is the primary contact to facilitate the transition of international students and scholars to educational experiences at El Centro College and life in the U.S. The Multicultural Center is located in the A building, room A-140.

When to Call El Centro College Campus Police

You should call El Centro College Campus Police at 911 from a college phone or 972-860-4290 if the incident is nearing the level of crisis. A crisis exists whenever a person's behavior poses imminent danger of:

- causing or threatening harm to self or others,
- impeding lawful activities of other members of the campus community,
- interfering with the health, safety, or wellbeing of other members of the El Centro College community and/or,
- experiencing a health emergency

If you are ever unsure of whether or not a crisis exists, err on the side of caution and call El Centro College Campus Police at 911 from a college phone or 972-860-4290 for assistance. A dispatcher will either coordinate a police response or give you information and/or referrals to assist the student in need.

To reach El Centro College Campus Police, call:

- 911 from college phones for emergencies
- 972-860-4290 from cell phones for campus emergencies

Incident Reporting Form

The CARE Team has developed a form to report concerns about or issues with students. The new form is a way to expand the team's efforts to help students who are in need of assistance. The Incident Reporting Form is located at:

https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?DallasCountyCCD&layout_id=10.

Description of behavior of concern:

When providing the description/narrative, please provide an objective description of behavior or situation(s) that have caused you concern. Attach any supporting documentation or materials if appropriate. Be as specific as possible about behaviors you have observed.

Note that the student will have a right to see the Incident Reporting Form. Any information you share on the Incident Reporting Form **may** be used in a student conduct investigation if the student's behavior violates the El Centro College Student Conduct Code.

Student Privacy

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Generally, post-secondary institutions must have written permission from the student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions:

- School officials with legitimate educational interest;
- Other schools to which a student is transferring;
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
- Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
- Accrediting organizations;
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

For more information see: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

A major goal of the HIPAA Act is to assure that individuals' health information is properly protected while allowing the flow of health information needed to provide and promote high quality health care and to protect the public's health and wellbeing. The Rule strikes a balance that permits important uses of information, while protecting the privacy of people who seek care and healing. El Centro College Student Counseling Center and Health Services records are protected under HIPAA. For more information see: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/>

Part II – Dealing with the Disruptive Student

Preventing Classroom Disruption

Faculty members recognize the special responsibilities placed upon them to encourage learning, demonstrate respect for students, and observe the regulations of the university to promote the advancement of knowledge. Students are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior toward other members of the college community. Disruptive students, whether in the classroom or online, hinder the academic process and negatively impact student learning. Disruptive student conduct is prohibited by the El Centro College Code of Student Conduct.

What constitutes disruption?

Disruption, as applied to the academic setting, means behaviors that interfere with the right of other students to learn or of the instructors to teach.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Persistently speaking without being recognized
- Persistent use of cell phones, beepers, etc.
- Personal insults
- Interrupting other speakers
- Distracting the class from the subject of discussion
- Refusal to comply with faculty direction
- In extreme cases, physical threats, harassing behavior (contact Campus Police)

Prevention

The best time to deal with disruption is before it begins. Faculty can take steps to reduce the likelihood of disruptive behaviors in the classroom.

- Explicitly state expectations for conduct in the syllabus. This may include:
 - Participation in class activities
 - Guidelines for communication
 - Expectations about the use of cell phones and pagers
 - Attendance/tardiness policy
 - Late assignment policy
- Explain consequences of inappropriate behavior
- Review these expectations with students during first class meeting
- Model respectful communication with your students
- Facilitate respectful exchange of ideas among your students
- Respond to problems consistently and in a timely manner
- Consider applying a classroom behavior contract (See Appendix)

Guidelines for Responding to Students of Concern

<u>Distressed Behavior</u>	<u>Disruptive Behavior</u>	<u>Dangerous Behavior</u>
<p>Student demonstrates distressed behavior but is not disruptive.</p> <p>Distressed behavior includes: tearfulness, anxiety, irritation, depression, or inability to concentrate.</p>	<p>Student demonstrates inappropriate behavior that is disruptive or abusive in nature.</p> <p>Disruptive behavior includes: Unrelated or bizarre comments, defiance, use of inappropriate/offensive language abuse, anger or focusing attention on self.</p>	<p>Crisis Event</p> <p>A crisis event exists whenever a person's behavior poses imminent danger of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Causing harm to self or others, *Impeding the lawful activities of other members of the campus community or causing significant property damage, or *Interfering with the health, safety, or wellbeing of other members of the El Centro College community.
↓	↓	↓
<p>Obtain consultation from your faculty counselor, if needed.</p> <p>Speak with student privately about what you are observing and your concerns if feasible.</p>	<p>Act immediately to stop inappropriate behavior and to prevent escalation. Speak with student confidentially when possible; clarify appropriate behavior, set expectations and consequences.</p> <p>Consult your faculty counselor for assistance.</p>	<p>Call Campus Police at 911 or 972-860-4290.</p> <p>Protect the safety of others and self.</p> <p>Depending on incident, buy time with the student by talking calmly and with concern, if possible, until assistance arrives.</p>
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<p>Inform student of assistance available on campus. If possible, help the student call for an appointment or walk them over to your faculty counselor.</p>	<p>You may ask the student to leave for the remainder of the class or activity as a result of the disruptive behavior, or at any point if the behavior continues.</p> <p>If student refuses, call Campus Police at 911</p>	<p>Provide your observations to Campus Police for their incident report.</p> <p>Complete the online Incident Reporting Form within 24 hours at https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?DallasCountyCCD&layout_id=10.</p>
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<p>Complete the online Incident Reporting Form within 24 hours at https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?DallasCountyCCD&layout_id=10.</p>	<p>Complete the online Incident Reporting Form within 24 hours at https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?DallasCountyCCD&layout_id=10.</p> <p>Provide your observations to Campus Police for their incident</p>	<p>Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from your faculty counselor.</p>
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<p>If distressed behavior persists and/or the student is unwilling to seek assistance contact the Student Counseling Center to identify assistance and determine options.</p>	<p>Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from your faculty counselor.</p>	

Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Situations

Office and front line staff often have face to face contact with students. They may be the initial responders to students who are in crisis, angry, verbally abusive, or potentially dangerous. These general suggestions can be utilized with the behavior pattern “do’s” and “don’ts” identified in Part III of this document. The following guidelines provide general principles for effective verbal intervention.

1. Remain Calm

Remember that the verbally escalating person is beginning to lose control. If the person senses that you are also losing control, the situation may get worse. Try to keep your emotions under control, even when challenged, insulted or threatened. This may be easier said than done, especially when a student is making threats, or using abusive language, but it is important in de-escalating the situation.

2. Be Empathetic

Try not to judge or discount the feelings of others. Whether or not you think the feelings are justified, those feelings are real to the other person. You may want to acknowledge them by saying things like, *“I understand that this is very frustrating for you.”* or *“I’m sorry that you’re feeling distressed about....”*

3. Watch Your Body Language

As a person becomes increasingly agitated, he or she will pay less attention to your words and more attention to your body language. Be aware of your use of space, posture, and gestures. Avoid gestures that might seem threatening. Make sure your nonverbal behavior is consistent with your verbal message.

4. Respect Personal Space

Maintain a safe distance (2 - 3 feet) from an agitated person. Invading personal space tends to increase the individual’s anxiety and may lead to increased agitation.

5. Keep It Simple

Be clear and direct in your message. Avoid jargon and complicated choices. A person who is beginning to lose rational control may not be processing information as he or she usually does. Complex messages may increase anxiety and make self-control more difficult.

6. Set and Enforce Reasonable Limits

If the person becomes belligerent, defensive or disruptive be sure to state limits and directives clearly and concisely. When setting limits, offer choices and consequences to the acting-out individual. For example, *“If you calm down, I can continue to assist you. If not, you will need to leave.”*

Consider saying *“It’s not my role to make that kind of decision here at El Centro College. Let me locate someone who can help you.”* or *“It’s hard for me to understand what you are saying when you are shouting. Please lower your voice so that I can better help you.”*

7. Request Assistance When Necessary

- If you perceive any threat, call Campus Police at 911 or 972-860-4290. In such situations your safety and those of others in your area are of utmost importance. The use of telephone “code words” or alarm buttons may be a good strategy and should be discussed and developed within your department.
- If the student is angry or demanding but you do not sense an immediate threat, he or she can be referred to your faculty counselor.

8. Document The Incident – Submit the online Incident Reporting Form.

****Core Elements of Communicating with a Student in Distress**

- Confirm that you have heard what the student has said.
- Express concern for the student.
- Refer the student to El Centro College resources or contact Campus Police.

Part III - Student Behaviors

The Distressed Student

You may become aware of students in distress in a variety of ways. Students may directly communicate their issues and distress to you. This may occur in private or in front of others. You may also sense there is something amiss with a student on the basis of the behavior they exhibit or on the basis of some changes in their demeanor over time.

- Distressed students may express heightened apprehension and fear verbally or behaviorally. These concerns will likely interfere with their learning and ability to appropriately participate in class activities. You may notice agitation, physical shaking of hands, or a trembling voice with students who are anxious.
- Distressed students may appear tense, anxious, and mistrustful. These students may tend to interpret minor oversights as significant personal rejection or may overreact to insignificant occurrences. They may be overly concerned with fairness and being treated equally.
- Distressed student behavior may be indicated by a change over time from actively engaged and involved to a noticeable loss of interest in classroom or other activities. Normally outgoing students may seem to retreat from interaction and involvement. Attendance issues may become a problem for students in distress. Depending on your relationship with the student, he/she may verbally communicate their distress with you.

- Distressed students may share events or incidents of discrimination, harassment, sexual or physical violence. This may be expressed through various forms of communication.
- Distressed students may appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol in your class or at your office or an event.
- Distressed students can also be students who are physically ill or who are experiencing a medical emergency event.

DO...

- Express compassion without intimate friendship.
- Communicate your concern if appropriate.
- Be specific and clear regarding the standards of behavior you expect if the student's behaviors are interfering with classroom activities.
- Listen for indications the student may be suicidal such as statements like *"Life doesn't seem worth living"* or *"I just feel I can't go on anymore."*
- Share your intention of referring them for assistance.
- In cases where behavior or other signs of drug or alcohol abuse is evident contact Campus Police and complete the online **Incident Reporting Form**.
- In cases of medical emergencies always contact Campus Police and then the Health Center at 214-860-2113.

DON'T...

- Take responsibility for their emotional state by saying *"I'll take care of it for you."*
- Discount their distress by saying *"It's not really that bad"* or *"You've really got nothing to worry about."*
- Assure the student that you are his/her friend.
- Be overly warm and nurturing.
- Be cute or humorous.
- Challenge or agree with any mistaken or illogical beliefs.
- Say anything else that might discount the personal significance or intensity of the student's feelings.
- Agree to maintain student's confidentiality.

Distressed Student Decision Tree

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If appropriate, speak with the student privately about what you are observing and your concerns. Inform the student of assistance available through the Student Counseling Center. If appropriate, help them call for an appointment or walk them over to your faculty counselor. • If there is potential for harm contact Campus Police at 911. For calls from cell phones dial 972-860-4290. Seek consultation from your faculty counselor or the Student Counseling Center if needed.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the faculty counselor and Student Counseling Center are not available and/or if behavior or verbal expression of distress is severe, or there is the potential of harm, contact Campus Police at 911. For calls from cell phones dial 972-860-4290. • If Alcohol or Drugs are evident contact Campus Police. • If the student discloses events or behavior involving harassment or discrimination complete the online Incident Reporting Form within 24 hours at https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?DallasCountyCCD&layout_id=10.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide your observations to Campus Police for their incident report.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from your faculty counselor.

The Disruptive Student

Often, large amounts of time and energy are given to students who make excessive demands on your time. They may seek to control your time and unconsciously believe that the amount of time they receive is a reflection of their worth. These students may also have difficulty keeping their comments consistent with the activities or with the topic or issue being discussed. Disruptive behavior can include verbal aggression.

DO...

- Set limits with them, “Excuse me; I need to attend to other things.”
- Remain calm and professional. Be sensitive to both verbal and nonverbal cues exhibited by a student who seems to be verbally aggressive.
- Intervene as soon as you hear or see the undesirable behavior. Be consistent with your intervention.
- Give the class a break and ask the student to meet outside of the class to speak privately.
- Briefly and directly convey to the student that verbally aggressive behavior is unacceptable and that the matter must be resolved.
- If, in your best judgment, the verbally aggressive student’s threats to create a safety risk, **contact Campus Police immediately**. Use a phone out of sight/hearing of individual if possible or request someone else call. Report details of the incident.

DON’T...

- Wait until you have become too involved to seek assistance
- Let them use you as their only source of support.
- Get trapped into giving advice, “*Why don’t you ...etc.?*”
- Get defensive.
- Engage in a power struggle with the student.
- Respond with anger.
- Allow the disruptive behaviors continue.

Disruptive Student Decision Tree

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek consultation from your faculty counselor if needed.• Speak with the student privately about what you are observing and your concerns.• Establish or reinforce behavioral expectations, or limits as necessary.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the student is excessively demanding, threatening or refuses to comply with faculty or staff direction, contact Campus Police at 911. For calls from cell phones dial 972-860-4290.
↓
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete the online Incident Reporting Form.• Provide your observations to Campus Police for their incident report.
↓
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from your faculty counselor.

The Potentially Dangerous Student

Certain behaviors may signal imminent danger to self or others. For example: physical or verbal threats, harassment, expressing personal insults, refusal to comply with directions of college officials or faculty members, and continued escalation of threats might signal imminent danger.

Dramatic changes in behavior over time may indicate the potential for dangerous behavior or harm to self. Actively engaged and involved students may begin to demonstrate a loss of interest in classroom or other activities. Normally outgoing students may seem to retreat from interaction and involvement. Depending on your relationship with these students, they may communicate their sense of despondency or outline a specific plan to do harm to themselves. You may also experience students whose behavior may be bizarre, eccentric or erratic. They may display disorganized speech and behavior, an inappropriate or complete lack of emotion, bizarre behavior that may include expressing hallucinations, strange beliefs that involve a serious misinterpretation of reality, social withdrawal, or an inability to connect with or track normal communication. While these behaviors, by themselves, may not indicate a potential for violence or danger, they may indicate the need for treatment or hospitalization. It should be noted that students who are experiencing these behaviors can be unpredictable and should be approached with caution.

DO...

- Contact Campus Police in situations where you believe violence is imminent.
- Immediately report students who share suicidal thoughts.
- Recognize that psychotic states can involve extreme emotion or lack of emotion and intense fear to the point of paranoia.
- Respond to the student with concern and kindness, and with firm reasoning. *“I can see you’re very upset. Please tell me how I can assist you.”*

- Articulate your specific concerns and state that you can see they need help.
- Be aware that the student may show no emotions or intense emotions.
- Ask another staff or student to call for help if needed.

DON'T...

- Assume the student will be able to care for him/herself.
- Agitate the student by arguing with their unrealistic beliefs.
- Assume the student comprehends what you are saying or doing.
- Release the student to the care of a roommate or friend without seeking professional consultation.
- Attempt to probe the delusional thinking.
- Assume responsibility by personally trying to resolve their issues.

Potentially Dangerous Student Decision Tree

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the student is expressing or acting out behaviors that demonstrate the potential for imminent harm to self or others seek immediate assistance. • Contact Campus Police at 911 or 972-860-4290. • Contact your faculty counselor or the Student Counseling Center.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the student is expressing or exhibiting behaviors that do not demonstrate the potential for imminent violence seek consultation or refer the student to get assistance with your faculty counselor. This may include walking the student to their office, if needed.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the online Incident Reporting Form within 24 hours. • Provide your observations to Campus Police for their incident report.
↓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain personal assistance as necessary for crisis debriefing from your faculty counselor.

Appendix

Campus and Community Resources

El Centro Campus Police	911 or 972-860-4290
Student Counseling Center	214-860-2113
Health Center	214-860-2113
Disability Services	214-860-2411
Multicultural Center	214-860-2090
Adult Resource Center	214-860-2427
Faculty Counselors:	
Roger Copeland, Academic Transfer	214-860-2080
Rosalinda Minnis, Business Design and Public Service	214-860-2074
Vicki Wood, Health and Legal Careers	972-860-5045
Valerie Crow-McDowell, (STEM)	214-860-2692

Sample Student Behavior Contract

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

I expect students to demonstrate restraint and maturity at ALL times; both in class and in their groups.

Being courteous in class and groups does not mean that you have to agree with everything that is being said. However, you will rarely get your way with anybody in life by being overly aggressive or just plain hostile. If you disagree with me (or I with you) it is a good idea to wait and discuss the situation when you are not angry.

All interaction with your professor and other students in the class must be of a positive nature. Disrespectful and rude behavior towards the professor or fellow students will not be tolerated, and any student who consistently violates this rule will be asked not to return to the classroom.

Failure to demonstrate common courtesy and respect toward others will result in your removal from the class.

Also, I ask that you do not study material from other classes during this class. If you feel that you must spend our class time studying or doing homework, please go to the library.

ACCEPTANCE OF CLASS TERMS

I have read all portions of the course syllabus and class schedule and have been given an opportunity to ask questions for clarification, if necessary. I further understand that all of the requirements and expectations will apply equally to all students in this class, including myself.

I understand that not every rule is listed in the syllabus. No professor can nor should list every rule imaginable. I know right from wrong, and will use my common sense and behave in a responsible manner.

Name:

Signature:

Student Number:

Date:

Print name, sign, date and turn this page in to Professor

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