

# DEVELOPING GROUND RULES FOR DEPARTMENTAL MEETINGS

The activities suggested below are an extension of the Division for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement's workshop, "Centering Respect: Creating New Behavioral Norms." They are designed to engage all community members in envisioning and identifying respectful interactions. Keep in mind that research demonstrates numerous benefits of respectful workplaces, including greater job satisfaction, cooperation, creativity, and better performance.

## PRE-MEETING

1

You can **request a template** to gather anonymous feedback from colleagues about community values, critical ground rules, and accountability (Send request to [crystal.bedley@rutgers.edu](mailto:crystal.bedley@rutgers.edu)).

2

**Dedicate a departmental meeting to the development of community rules.** If the department/unit does not regularly create agendas, make sure to announce prior to the meeting. Make sure to include all staff and part-time employees.

3

**Establish** the following **roles**: **Facilitator** (the person who will guide the conversation ensuring all members can participate). **Recorder** (someone who will document each suggestion)

**An important note:** Women, BIPOC, and staff are often relegated to these roles (and may volunteer for these roles because of social pressure to adhere to gendered and racialized norms). Be mindful about these power dynamics and consider assigning the role to someone with greater influence who can listen actively.



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## DURING THE MEETING

1

**Share** the **feedback** gathered through the feedback form. Ask for additional suggestions and clarify ideas shared as you move towards consensus.

2

The facilitator should remind folks that the **focus is on behavioral ground rules** (rather than procedural one, like putting phones on vibrate). Behavioral rules focus on specific actions people can take.

3

If more time is needed to build consensus, then arrange to revisit the topic at the next meeting.

## AFTER THE MEETING

1

**Continue to collect feedback** (especially from colleagues who could not be present at the brainstorming meeting) and bring the suggestions back to the group.

2

Once established, **make the ground rules accessible** (whether physically posted in a shared space and/or in a shared electronic location). Greater visibility for the community rules demonstrates commitment and supports accountability.

3

**Revisit the ground rules** at each subsequent meeting until folks are comfortable using them.

4

**Review the rules annually** and make adjustments accordingly.



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# TIPS



No more than 10 ground rules (so folks can remember them)



Consider reviewing the community rules before difficult topics are discussed, such as meetings where individuals are being evaluated and meetings where new policies/processes are being developed



Remind colleagues that everyone is responsible for helping each other use the ground rules, not just the chair/program director/dean

# GROUND RULE EXAMPLES



Avoid interrupting others and monitor your level of participation by balancing speaking and listening. Be aware if you're dominating the conversation and invite others in to share the conversational space.



Expressing disagreement is expected. Be sure to phrase your remarks so that it is clear you are challenging the view, not the person.



Jointly design next steps. This ensures that everyone is committed to moving forward together as a team.



One person speaks at a time (some additional strategies to consider include opening the floor to colleagues who have less power/authority first. For example, opening the floor to students, then staff, then faculty. Or asking for feedback from contingent faculty, then pre-tenure faculty, then tenured faculty. Or seeking out input from part-time staff before opening the floor to full-time staff.)



Limit your own assumptions and ask clarifying questions as needed.

