

# Professionalism in the RCB Classroom: The Finance Department Way

## Introductory Comments

Welcome to Finance! For some of you this may be your first time taking a finance course, while others may already have multiple such offerings under your belt. Regardless, we in Finance wish to emphasize that professionalism is a primary skill you should develop and take away from your Robinson College experience. Why this focus? The degree of professionalism that you develop during your time with us will strongly impact your ability to achieve your goals at Robinson and in your career.<sup>1</sup> As such, we are focused on and devoted to ensuring student success not only through our many intellectual and personal interactions with students, but also by showing them the professionalism pathway. We further believe that professionalism and related ethical behavior are essential for finance career professionals as they serve as the stewards of the organization's funds and hold responsibility for the welfare of its shareholders, creditors, employees, and other stakeholders.

In setting out the professionalism expectations for students taking any Finance course at the Robinson College, an alignment with the general expectations of the real-world workplace is always kept in mind. These standards may significantly differ from what your current habits are or what you may have experienced in other courses. That is fine; that is part of why you are here. Developing new habits of professionalism in your everyday interactions, both inside and outside the classroom, will contribute significantly to giving you the Robinson advantage in your career.

In the paragraphs below, we offer guidance on a number of areas of professional behavior that we expect of all students taking courses in Finance and discuss consequences that will result from their failure to abide. These areas include:

- ❖ Attendance and Punctuality
- ❖ Use of Technology
- ❖ Classroom Conduct
- ❖ Work Product
- ❖ Communications with Faculty, Staff, and Others
- ❖ Academic Honesty

These behaviors by no means address all aspects of the professionalism you should develop while at Robinson, and your instructors may have specific aspects of professional behavior that they wish to add further. As such, read the syllabus carefully for such details and expectations.

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<sup>1</sup> A survey by the *National Association of Colleges and Employers* finds that *all* employers rated professionalism/work ethic as 100% essential, but that only 42.5% of employees exhibited these behaviors ([National Association of Colleges and Employers Survey](#)).

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## Attendance and Punctuality

Always remember that classroom sessions and group meetings involve other people who are committing their time to the learning experience. When you are not at a meeting on time and ready to go, you steal time and value from others. Entering a class after the official start time, returning after the conclusion of a break, and exiting class prior to its conclusion, whether by 30 seconds or 15 minutes, are disruptive behaviors that are highly disrespectful to the instructor, your fellow classmates, and to the integrity of the program. Such behaviors will have severe consequences as discussed below.

Foremost, please make sure that you understand and follow the Department's policies regarding attendance. The Finance Department's attendance policy is to allow students the equivalent of two (2) weeks of absences. This means, for example, in a regular 15-week semester, students are allowed two (2) absences for classes meeting once a week, four (4) absences for classes meeting twice a week, and six (6) absences for classes meeting three times a week. For courses on the 8-week schedule, students are allowed one (1) absence. A student absent for more than the permitted number of class sessions is subject to being administratively withdrawn from the course. Instructors may consider exceptional cases including, for example, extended illnesses, family emergencies, and participation in mandated university activities in enforcing the above policy. Furthermore, without prior approval from your instructor, absences will be counted for being absent for the entire class session and also for arriving late or leaving early. Also, being absent from class does not give you a free pass on having to submit assignments or sit for exams. Please contact your instructor for their policy on missed assignments or exams.

Please note the potential consequences of being administratively withdrawn from the course. These include a failing grade if withdrawn after the semester mid-point, forfeiting your tuition, paying for and repeating the same course or taking another course, and delaying graduation. Instructors may take attendance in a variety of ways, such as taking attendance at the start and/or end of class, through sign-up sheets, or by other means. Thus, in terms of best practice, please abide by the following simple rules.

- 1. Arrive on time to class and be ready for class to begin. Always schedule slack into your arrival time so that you can handle unexpected delays. Also, by coming to class on time, you will not miss any important announcements the instructor makes at the beginning of each class.*
- 2. If you know that you are going to be late, let the instructor know as far ahead of time as possible, but do not enter the class before a break, if offered, unless the instructor has confirmed that it is OK. (Do NOT rush in traffic or send a text/email to the instructor while driving.)*
- 3. If you arrive late, please wait until a break, if offered, to turn in any assignments due at*

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*the start of class, but note that the instructor may view the assignment as “late.”*

- 4. Do not disrupt the class by exiting the class early while activities are in session. If you anticipate a need to leave early, unless it is a real emergency, please seek prior permission from the instructor. Also, in the case of an emergency, please notify your instructor via email about the reason for your early departure.*
- 5. Do not miss the first day of class as many important organizing activities take place and instructors set forth the learning landscape to be followed for the remainder of the course. If you miss the first day, contact the instructor to find out what you need to do to get back on track. Regardless, absence from the first class session counts towards the maximum allowed absences regardless of whether you are officially registered for the course.*

Also, note that entering the class late or exiting the class early without permission can also be viewed as disruptive behavior and potentially lead to a student being administratively withdrawn from the course with repeated behavior.

### Use of Technology

We live in an e-world, and it is only going to become more so in the future. That means that we have to consciously be masters of our technology, rather than the other way around. You likely already have the habit of turning off your cell phone in a theater or a restaurant—that is an excellent example of how we master human interaction with technology. In the workplace, the classroom, team meetings, and the like, you need to develop similar habits like those. Here are some expectations about how you should manage your technology at Robinson.

- 1. All cell phones and other electronic devices should be silenced unless appropriate for the class activity. Use technology only for appropriate classroom purposes.*
- 2. Your tablet or laptop may be appropriate for taking notes, but it is not appropriate for any other activity not approved by your instructor.*
- 3. If you need to have a device turned on due to pending personal or business emergencies then (a) inform your instructor ahead of time, and (b) only have it on vibrate or other silent notification mode. Otherwise, do not text in class or leave the classroom to text or make a call while a session is still going on.*

It is very disruptive to the smooth functioning of the class if students do not follow these guidelines. Violations of these guidelines disrespect the instructor, your classmates, and the program's integrity. Repeated violations of these guidelines can lead to a student being administratively withdrawn from the course.

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## Classroom Conduct

When you go to class or a meeting, get into a mental “meeting mode.” This shows respect for others in attendance and enables you to be fully engaged. It is a bad look to be asked for your opinion and not know where the conversation is. So, focus your mind on the interactions ahead by performing the following:

1. *When the session begins, focus on the class. Put away all other work, end your conversations, and pay attention at all times.*
2. *Respect those around you; do not distract others when attention should be directed elsewhere.*
3. *Do not shout or interrupt. If you have a question or comment, raise your hand and let the instructor work you into the flow of the conversation.*
4. *Wait until the class or meeting ends before packing your books and belongings. You want to get into this habit at Robinson to avoid mindlessly doing so in a business setting.*
5. *Like most Robinson classes, most business meetings are held inside temperature-controlled rooms. Unless they are being worn for religious purposes or you require them to participate in the class, remove clothing or anything else you may have on your head as well as sunglasses, earbuds or other listening devices.*
6. *Meeting rooms and classrooms are not diners. Unless expressly permitted (e.g., the “working lunch”) you should not eat during class.*
7. *Your class is your professional space. Respect the space of those coming in the next class behind you by not leaving trash or paper. When exiting the classroom, arrange your table and chair as you found them.*
8. *Maintain attention; no sleeping or resting your head on the desk.*
9. *Do not record any part of a lecture unless it is explicitly allowed by the instructor.*
10. *When giving a presentation, appropriate professional dress is required. While “appropriate” differs for bankers versus students, there are basic standards of attire if you are to be taken seriously by your audience.*
11. *Oral presentations are a common form of business communication. As an audience member, you should always give respect to the presenters. You should ask questions and provide critiques and other feedback in a professional manner.*
12. *Students have a right to express their opinions and are encouraged to professionally engage in classroom discussion as directed by the professor. However, students do not have a right to disrupt class and are obligated not to do so. For additional guidance, see [Definitions](#) under [Student Code of Conduct and Administrative Policies and Procedures](#).*

Repeated violations of classroom conduct guidelines can lead to a student being administratively withdrawn from the course.

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## Work Product

Work product is also referred to as “deliverables” because it refers to items you are expected to deliver. The deliverable is a substantial concept in the workplace; colleagues and clients need your work to be completed on time and presented in good shape. When your deliverables are late, others are impacted. There is zero tolerance in the workplace for late work, and when work is delivered late, you will be held accountable. Thus, you should abide by the following:

1. *All assignments must be turned in on time. This is mandatory in life if you want to do well; get in the habit at Robinson and save a lot of later grief on the job.*
2. *All assignments and projects should be proofread and spell-checked. Nothing tells the boss “I don’t care” or “I think your assignment was stupid” more than a document having spelling and grammar errors.*
3. *Do not plagiarize. You can and often will be fired for stealing intellectual property or representing others’ work or ideas as your own. We take intellectual property rights very seriously here at Robinson, too. Look carefully over all the University and College material on plagiarism and other aspects of intellectual property rights. If you have a question, ask.*
4. *Do not improperly copy, store, or disclose privileged information. This is a violation that can get you fired in the real world. Whether it happens in the classroom or when you are out interacting with an employer as an employee or intern, you should **never** reveal private or proprietary information to **anyone** not authorized to receive it, not even in casual conversations with your closest friends.*

## Communication with Faculty, Staff, and Others

Find the appropriate time and place for interactions with any of the above. Guidelines to abide by include the following:

1. *Your instructor will set forth procedures for communication. These include office hours, instructions on making “by appointment” office visits, and when, where and how to contact them via telephone, e-mail, or other means.*
2. *Students are responsible for all announcements made on iCollege and by email.*
3. *Do not expect an immediate answer when emailing or calling an instructor. Instructors will endeavor to return your communication within one business day. After one business day a polite follow-up would be appropriate. To ensure student privacy under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, instructors can only respond to email queries via the student’s official GSU email address (i.e., jdoe@student.gsu.edu).*
4. *Refrain from engaging the professor immediately at the end of the class. The professor needs to prepare the classroom for use in the next class and allow enough set-up time for the incoming professor. Students should only engage with the professor after the*

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*professor has completed all classroom-related activities. Professors will always be happy to meet with students during office hours or at other mutually convenient times.*

5. *Unless invited to do otherwise, all communications should be in a professional tone and format. This means more than just showing that you took the time to use proper grammar, spelling, etc. It also means addressing instructors and unfamiliar colleagues appropriately. In all relationships, stepping down from too much formality in your initial communication is much easier than stepping up to propriety after getting off on the wrong foot with a sloppy first impression.*
6. *Everyone's privacy is important. Students and instructors should avoid discussing grades, personal issues, or any other performance or disciplinary items where others may hear. If necessary, ask for an appointment to discuss these issues in private or at another time and place, e.g., the instructor's office hours. We value your privacy, but we need your cooperation to ensure it.*
7. *In a group project/presentation, each member should actively participate in every group meeting and contribute their fair share. They should respond to other group members in a timely manner. The ability to coordinate and collaborate with others toward a common goal is vital for the success of all businesses.*

### Academic Honesty

In the classroom or business world, you must always be honest. As a GSU student, all university and college regulations concerning academic honesty apply. In general, students are expected to recognize and uphold intellectual and academic integrity standards. The university assumes as a minimum standard of conduct in academic matters that students be honest and submit only the products of their own efforts for credit.

It is essential that students read and understand the portions of the *University Policy on Academic Honesty* that relate to plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsification, and multiple submissions. The university's policy on academic honesty is published in the Student Handbook, *On Campus*, which is available to all members of the university community (<http://studenthandbook.gsu.edu/>). Specifically, refer to [Academic Conduct Policies and Procedures](#). This Policy represents a core value of the University. All members of the University community are responsible for knowing and abiding by its tenets. Students are expected to carefully review the referred Policy prior to undertaking any research or other assignments.

Cheating on examinations involves giving or receiving unauthorized help before, during, or after an examination. Examples of unauthorized help include the use of notes, texts, or "crib sheets" during an examination (unless specifically approved by the faculty member), or sharing information with another student during an examination (unless specifically authorized by the faculty member). Other examples include intentionally allowing another student to view one's



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own exam and collaborating before or after an examination if such collaboration is expressly forbidden by the faculty member. For additional detail, see [Definitions and Examples in Academic Conduct Policies and Procedures](#). Disciplinary penalties for violations of these policies can include but are not limited to, the following: suspension, expulsion, and transcript annotations (temporary for a period of five years or permanent, as designated). Further, course credit earned at other institutions while on suspension may not be transferred to GSU.

Plagiarism and misrepresentation of work are also severe offenses, which can lead to expulsion and a grade of “F” for the course. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to, taking material from any source written by another and presenting it as your own by failing to indicate complete and accurate attribution to the correct author/creator. This includes marginally altering material from another source and calling it your own creation. Plagiarism includes materials taken from internet sources. Proper citation requires quote marks or other distinctive formatting for the material, followed directly by a reference to the source. The source details may be in the footnotes/endnotes/references section, but only listing a reference without proper indication in the text is not proper attribution and can be considered plagiarism. Misrepresentation of work includes but is not limited to presenting material prepared for another class or presenting outside work as an original work product produced for this class. See also [Definitions and Examples in Academic Conduct Policies and Procedures](#).

Students are encouraged to discuss freely with faculty any questions they may have about the provisions of the *University Policy on Academic Honesty* before submitting assignments. ***Lack of knowledge of the contents of this policy is not an acceptable defense to any charge of academic dishonesty.***

### Concluding Comments

All faculty in the Finance Department are highly motivated to ensure students’ success at Robinson and in their professional careers. Developing good professionalism habits will help you do well in school and can significantly impact your ability to get interviews, internships, jobs, etc. Experts agree that professionalism is one of the most significant factors in determining your level of career success. This trait affects every aspect of how you perform your job. A lack of professionalism can cost you a job or promotion and even put you first in line for a layoff.

Developing good professionalism habits, however, can take time and practice. In the Finance Department, we aim to provide you with the finance knowledge and training that will make you competitive with students in the best business schools in the country. At the same time, our goal is to give you an *extra* edge by showing you the professionalism pathway to success. To develop good habits, we need to shed bad habits. This will not be an easy task. In the short run, there may

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be many instances where you will question our actions and judgment. But always remember that we are dedicated to ensuring your long-term success because your success is our success. **We are Panther Proud!**