

<b>ALGONQUIN COLLEGE DIRECTIVE</b>	<b>NO. OF PAGES</b> 4	<b>DIRECTIVE NO.</b> A24
	<b>ORIGINATOR</b> Human Resources	
	<b>APPROVED BY</b> President's Executive Committee	
<b>TITLE</b> <b>STAFF-STUDENT PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE</b> 2007.08.29	<b>REPLACES</b> New

### **Preamble**

A positive and professional relationship between Algonquin College staff and students is crucial to the teaching learning process. Students have the right to a learning environment that is supportive and free from any undue influence by any member of the Algonquin College staff.

It is recognized that staff hold a position of trust and authority in relation to students and that this position should be exercised with great care and diligence. Staff have a responsibility to avoid any apparent or actual conflict of interest between their professional responsibilities and their personal relationships with students.

This policy refers to two types of staff student relationships: those that involve intimate behaviour and those that involve nepotism.

### **Definitions**

1. Intimate behaviour includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. Romantic and/or sexual relationships;
  - b. Formation of a deep emotional bond which is very private and closely personal;
  - c. Physical contact inappropriate to a staff/student relationship;
  - d. Communication, whether in person or not, inappropriate to a staff/student relationship.
  
2. Nepotism is the demonstration of preferential treatment towards a family member due to the relationship rather than to an objective assessment of ability or suitability.

3. Family members include the staff member's spouse, partner, parents, children and others related to the employee by blood or by law.
4. A staff member includes any full-time, part-time employee, or contractor of Algonquin College.

### **Policy**

In keeping with its commitment to maintain a learning environment free from abuse of power and authority, the College considers a relationship of an intimate and/or personal nature between a staff member and a student, whether the student is a non-family member or a family member, to be a conflict of interest. The College further deems such a relationship unacceptable when the student is enrolled in a program under the supervision of the staff member. Accusations of undue access or advantage, favoritism, or unfavorable treatment may ensue.

An intimate, personal relationship between a staff member and a student, who is a non-family member, even if it is of a consensual nature, is a conflict of interest. It is unacceptable for a staff member to use, or be perceived to use, the authority of his/her position to induce a student into an intimate relationship. Such behavior is damaging to the learning process and causes harm to the student and to the College. Given the power imbalance in staff/student relationships, the defense of consensual conduct among adults is not recognized when dealing with relationships that become intimate.

A staff member in a supervisory position to a student who is a family member is considered to be in a conflict of interest. Nepotism is considered unacceptable behavior.

### **Procedures, Roles and Responsibilities**

- 1.1 It is the responsibility of each College staff member to make every effort to avoid a situation that could lead to the development of a relationship with a student that could become intimate.
- 1.2 It is the responsibility of each College staff member to make every effort to avoid situations that could lead to circumstances that would be perceived as nepotism.
- 1.3 Staff/Student Relationship Declaration  
A staff member is required to declare a conflict of interest to his/her immediate supervisor or to an appropriate administrator at a higher level:

- 1.3.1 when a staff member is involved in an intimate relationship with a student enrolled at the College.
- 1.3.2 when a staff member has an intimate relationship with a student planning to attend the College and prior to the student's registration.
- 1.3.3 when a staff member has a family member planning to enroll in a program under the supervision of the staff member. This should be made known prior to the student's registration.

#### 1.4 Conflict Resolution

- 1.4.1 In consultation with the staff member and other appropriate staff, the supervisor or administrator will develop an action plan to resolve the conflict of interest. The plan must strive to maintain the student's immediate and long term educational goals. The plan is to be completed and presented to the student by the academic administrator responsible for the program within five (5) working days of the conflict of interest being reported. The plan must be acceptable to both the student and to the College.

Should the conflict of interest involve a faculty member, the plan will centre on the removal of the faculty member's responsibility in the student's teaching/ learning process.

- 1.4.2 Where the action plan is not acceptable to the student, the staff member or to the College or no apparent solution is found to remove the conflict of interest, the matter will be referred to the Personnel Review Committee.

#### 1.5 Personnel Review Committee

The Personnel Review Committee has the mandate to determine final resolution to conflicts of interest should the action plan outlined in section 1.3 be deemed unacceptable. This resolution will be taken in camera within five (5) working days of the receipt of the report of a conflict of interest and will be final and binding.

The Personnel Review Committee will consist of the following members:

- a. Director, Student Services (Chair)
  - b. Director, Human Resources
  - c. Academic Administrator
- 1.6 Employees who fail to declare a conflict of interest as required under this Directive or who refuse to adhere to directions regarding a conflict of

interest arising from a staff-student relationship may be the subject of disciplinary action.

### **Confidentiality**

All information disclosed, reports prepared, and resolutions or determinations made in accordance with this Directive will be held in strict confidence by College staff members involved, and where appropriate, placed within the employee's Human Resources file. Where required by law, information will be released.

### **Related Directives**

A8 – Harassment and Discrimination

A21 – Rights, Freedoms, Responsibilities and Code of Conduct for the Algonquin College Community

*(original signed by)*

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President