

HR 21**Staff/Student Personal Relationships**

Classification:	Human Resources
Responsible Authority:	Director, Labour Relations
Executive Sponsor:	Vice President, Human Resources
Approval Authority:	Algonquin College Executive Team
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PURPOSE

To state the College's position on personal relationships between employees and students and to provide a mechanism for the disclosure and consideration of personal relationships between employees and students.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees and students of the College community.

DEFINITIONS

Word/Term	Definition
Personal Relationship	Goes beyond the normal level of relationship between a student and employee that is ordinarily present in an academic setting and includes, but is not limited to, close friendships and romantic and/or sexual relationships
Employees	Includes full-time employees, part-time employees, and contractors of Algonquin College, including bargaining unit members, management and non-unionized employees
Student	Any person who is currently enrolled in a course or program at the College, who is planning to attend the College but who may not have registered, or who was enrolled at Algonquin College when he or she was in a Personal Relationship with an employee
Supervisor	Any employee of Algonquin College who supervises staff

POLICY

1. Algonquin College is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from conflicts of interest and abuses of power and authority, both actual and perceived. A positive and professional relationship between the College's employees and its students is crucial to maintaining such a learning environment.

2. Relationships of a personal nature between employees and students, including consensual relationships, create the potential for actual and/or perceived conflicts of interest and abuses of power that could result in harm to both the student and the entire College community.
3. Personal relationships between employees and students expose all parties involved to potential harm that is unacceptable in a setting where the needs of students must come first. Such relationships may result in serious difficulties in maintaining the boundaries of professional and personal life, and can disrupt the teaching learning environment for students and employees. The reputation of the College is important both to employees and students, and any personal relationship between an employee and a student puts that reputation, and thus the interest of the students, employees, and the entire College community at risk.
4. An employee's personal relationship with a student who is enrolled in a program under the direct or indirect supervision of the employee is especially inappropriate and creates a conflict of interest. Accusations of undue access or advantage, favoritism, or unfavorable treatment may ensue.
5. Supervisors must be sensitive to the possibility of a personal relationship in their areas of responsibility and must be committed to ensuring that the work environment is free from personal relationships between employees and students.
6. Personal relationships between employees and students are not acceptable. A staff member shall not engage in such a relationship nor shall they create conditions that support such a relationship. Employees involved in such personal relationships may be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment or any other employment changes that may be necessary to mitigate the potential for the effects described above if the personal relationship may or does result in:
 - a. an actual or perceived conflict of interest;
 - b. an actual or perceived abuse of authority;
 - c. requests for favors or special treatment from a student;
 - d. preferential or differential treatment of a student by a staff member.
7. Employees who have entered into personal relationships with students shall immediately disclose such relationships in accordance with the disclosure obligations set out in this policy and failure to do so will be considered a misconduct in and of itself that may be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment.
8. Supervisors who have been advised or become aware of the existence of an actual or perceived personal relationship between an employee and a student shall take immediate and appropriate action as set out in this policy.
9. Non-compliance with this policy constitutes misconduct and the employee who has not complied may be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal. Examples of situations in which discipline may be imposed on employees who do not comply with this policy include, but are not limited to, situations in which:

- a. an employee engaged in a personal relationship with a student that resulted in an actual or perceived conflict of interest;
 - b. an employee failed to disclose a personal relationship with a student;
 - c. a supervisor was aware of an actual or perceived personal relationship between an employee and a student but failed to report the personal relationship.
10. All information disclosed, reports prepared, and findings made under this policy will be held in strict confidence by the employees involved, and, where appropriate, placed in the employee's file held in the Human Resources department. However, when satisfying disclosure obligations before a board, tribunal, or court, or as otherwise required by law, information will be released.

PROCEDURE

<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
1. Requirement to Declare	
1.1 Declare personal relationship to immediate supervisor or Director, Labour Relations if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Employee is currently having a personal relationship with a student; b. Employee has been involved within previous six months in a personal relationship with a student; c. Employee believes that a personal relationship may develop with a student. 	Employee
1.2 If in a personal relationship with a student, take steps not to be involved, directly or indirectly, with the teaching and evaluation of that student and refrain from exerting any influence or responsibility over the student's program.	Employee/Supervisor
1.3 If in a personal relationship with a student, abstain from being involved in any selection process for courses, scholarships, bursaries, prizes, employment that could impact the student or be involved in dealing with a complaint or an appeal involving the student.	Employee/Supervisor
1.4 If an employee suspects or is informed that another employee is in a non-declared personal relationship with a student, approach in confidence the immediate supervisor or the Director, Labour Relations. If uncertain about whether to declare, seek guidance from Director, Labour Relations.	Employee

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| 1.5 | Report the perceived personal relationship between the employee and the student within two working days within receipt of the information to Director, Labour Relations | Immediate supervisor, or administrator informed of situation |
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2. Actions to be Taken

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| 2.1 | In each case of an employee/ student personal relationship, determine the procedure to be followed, the breadth & nature of the investigation to be undertaken and the appropriate individual to whom any recommendations are to be made. | Director, Labour Relations |
| 2.2 | Where necessary, investigate the existence and/or nature of an actual or apparent personal relationship between a student and employee and investigate any other related issues or violations that are relevant to this policy. | Director, Labour Relations/Chair |
| 2.3 | Assess whether there has been an actual or apparent violation of the policy. | Director, Labour Relations/Chair |
| 2.4 | Recommend to the employee designated under 2.1 what measures, if any, should be taken as a result of the actual or apparent violation of this policy including any corrective measure and/or disciplinary action, if any, to be taken by the College as a result of any violation(s) of this policy. | Director, Labour Relations/ Chair |
| 2.5 | Implement corrective measures if the employee involved in a personal relationship with a student directly or indirectly teaches, evaluates or supervises the student or has any influence or responsibility over the student's program. | Director, Labour Relations/ Chair |

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

[HR 21: Appendix 1](#)

RELATED POLICIES

HR18 Employee Code of Conduct
HR22 Respectful Workplace

RELATED MATERIALS

None