

Department of History and Classical Studies
McGill University

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
April 2019

Introduction

The Department of History and Classical Studies is committed to creating a positive learning, teaching and supervisory environment for all students, faculty and staff. In recognition of McGill University's Mission and Principles, this Statement of Principles of Professional Conduct (Statement of Principles) affirms the foundations, principles and guiding best practices that are essential for an environment in which all parties can flourish.

Purpose and Scope

As employees of McGill University and members of the Department of History and Classical Studies (HCS), we are responsible for sustaining the highest standards of McGill University, and of the broader communities in which we participate. As a community, we value academic freedom, integrity, responsibility, equity, and inclusiveness as well the intellectual and social well-being of students. Everyone is deserving of dignity and respect. The Statement of Principles encourages staff to act on these values in all of our administrative, teaching, research and supervisory activities.

The Statement of Principles is a shared expression of our commitment to upholding the ethical, professional and legal standards we use as the basis for our daily and long-term decisions and actions. We all must be cognizant of, and comply with the relevant policies, standards, collective agreements, laws and regulations that guide our work. We are each individually accountable for our own actions and, as employees of McGill University and members of the Department of History and Classical Studies, we are collectively accountable for upholding these standards of behavior and for compliance with all applicable laws and policies.

The university has legal guidelines regulating the relationships between staff and students which this Statement of Principles does not supersede. These guidelines include the University's the *Charter of Students' Rights*, *Guidelines on Intimate Relationships Between Teaching Staff and Students*, the *Policy Against Sexual Violence*, the *Policy on Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited by Law*, the *Student Code of Conduct*, and the *Regulation on Conflict of Interest*.

The Statement of Principles is divided into the following sections:

- Definitions
- Training
- Teaching
- Supervision
- On Instructor – Student Relationships
- Duty to Refer
- Revisions and Updates

I. Definitions

Student: includes every person enrolled in any component of an academic program at McGill University, including but not limited to: undergraduate and graduate courses, graduate thesis preparation, post-doctoral research, and other training programs.

Teaching staff: includes every person delivering any component of an academic program, including, but not limited to: undergraduate and graduate courses, supervision of graduate students, supervision of post-doctoral researchers, and services delivered by University librarians and archivists. Teaching staff includes graduate students teaching undergraduate and graduate courses and working as Teaching Assistants. The Statement of Principles of Professional Conduct uses the term “instructor” interchangeably with “teaching staff”.

Administrative and support staff: Employees of McGill University who assist the institution with the delivery of its mission and individual units in the delivery of their services, supporting students and faculty in the process.

II. Training

All teaching, administrative and support staff of the Department of History and Classical Studies have a responsibility to inform themselves about the rules, regulations, policies and principles that govern their workplace conduct. The Chair of the Department of History and Classical Studies has the additional responsibility of ensuring that information and training opportunities related to students rights are developed and communicated in a proactive manner.

All new teaching, administrative and support staff will be given a copy of the *Statement of Principles of Professional Conduct* and will be informed about student rights, as well as being informed about relevant policies and documents and the responsibility to educate themselves. All new teaching, administrative and support staff will be provided with a copy of the following documents upon commencement of their responsibilities: *McGill University's Policy Against Sexual Violence*, its *Policy on Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited by Law*, and the *Regulation of Conflict of Interest* and the *Code of Students Rights*. Any additional training materials offered at a university-wide level including on-line training materials will be prescribed to new staff. Any changes and updates should be communicated to all staff in a proactive manner.

They shall also be directed to the following links for this same information:

<https://mcgill.ca/students/srr/policies-student-rights-and-responsibilities>

<https://mcgill.ca/secretariat/policies-and-regulations>

The Department of History and Classical Studies A to Z (A Working Document 31 May 2015) will be updated annually and the most recent edition will also be provided to new teaching staff. New faculty and staff will also be given information about resource people and institutional support available to help students in distress in order to assist with referral options as outlined in Section VII.

As graduate students can be simultaneously students in the department, as well as members of the teaching staff, it is important that they be properly mentored and trained in their responsibilities in both of these capacities.

III. Teaching

As enumerated in the *McGill University Charter of Student Rights*, “Students have the right to be treated with equality, dignity and respect, including the right to be free from harassment and from discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex or gender, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age (except as provided by law), political conviction, language, ethnicity, religion, social condition, family status, a disability or the use of any means to palliate a disability.”

We are committed to providing a learning environment that is safe, inclusive and equitable. This applies to classroom activities as well as to mentorship and professional support for graduate and undergraduate students.

IV. Student Supervision

Faculty and staff in the Department of History and Classical Studies are responsible for fostering a safe and respectful environment in which all students under their direct supervision can flourish.

Supervision entails any role in which faculty or staff are overseeing the work of undergraduate and graduate students, including where students are performing the work of teaching assistants, research assistants or where undergraduate and graduate student research is being supervised.

Supervision in the Department of History and Classical Studies is built on the principles of equity and fairness and supports the department’s commitment to fostering a collegial work environment conducive to the success of undergraduate and graduate studies, and research.

Recognizing that there are especially important responsibilities vis a vis graduate student supervision, the Statement of Principles affirms the delegation of rights and responsibilities as outlined in the Regulations on Graduate Student Supervision.

Faculty responsible for supervising undergraduate and graduate students have a duty to inform themselves of all contractual and legal obligations regarding supervisory duties and to ensure that the scope and limitations of these responsibilities are clearly understood by all parties.

V. Research

We are committed to pursuing the highest standards of research in a responsible and ethical manner. Research protocols are governed by compliance with McGill University’s Ethics and Research Board and best practices as approved by the Canadian Historical Association and the American Historical Association.

The supervision of research assistants is subject to all aspects of this Statement of Principles of Professional Conduct governing instructor – student relations in teaching contexts.

VI. On Instructor – Student Relationships

As outlined in Section III, we are committed to providing a learning environment that is safe, inclusive and equitable. This applies to classroom activities as well as to mentorship and professional support for undergraduate and graduate students.

The relationship between a member of the teaching staff and their student is a relationship of trust, power and authority.

All teaching, administrative and support staff in the Department of History and Classical Studies are expected to conduct themselves with integrity and professionalism in all their relationships with students.

As outlined in McGill University's "Guidelines on Intimate Relationships Between Teaching Staff and Students", romantic and sexual relationships are generally inconsistent with the obligation of teaching staff members to conduct themselves with integrity and professionalism. These guidelines, as well as this section of the Statement of Principles, are informed by existing policies at McGill University including *Guidelines on Intimate Relationships Between Teaching Staff and Students*, the *Policy Against Sexual Violence*, the *Policy on Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited by Law*, the *Student Code of Conduct*, the *Charter of Students' Rights*, and the *Regulation on Conflict of Interest*.

Undergraduate and graduate students deserve a respectful, professionally supportive and non-sexualized work environment. Faculty must conduct themselves in such a way as to promote this goal. Students should not be targeted for romantic and sexual relationships. Sexualized or suggestive comments should not be made about, or to, students.

Romantic and sexual relationships between teaching staff and undergraduate students risk undermining the pedagogical relationship and professional environment which is crucial to student learning and flourishing. Consent is vitiated by relationships of power. We believe such relationships are inappropriate and professionally unacceptable.

Moreover, regulations at the university level prohibit romantic and sexual relationships between faculty and students in any context in which there is a direct relationship of power and assessment (including but not limited to academic supervision, teaching, research supervision, see section 8.1.i of the University's *Policy on Sexual Violence*). Such relationships are inappropriate and professionally unacceptable, given their significant potential for abuse and for harm to individual students and to the supervisory and pedagogical relationship. Under current McGill regulations romantic and sexual relationships in such a context constitute a conflict of interest.

Relationships between graduate students and faculty members who do not have a direct supervisory or teaching relationship but work in overlapping areas such that a faculty member might reasonably be expected to judge a student or promote the career of a student are also problematic and must be avoided.

Relationships between faculty members and graduate students who are not in a direct or indirect relationship of power may nonetheless still be problematic, particularly if they undermine the goal of a mutually respectful, professionally supportive and non-sexualized work environment for students. Faculty must at all times conduct themselves in such a way as to promote this end.

Under Québec labour law, relationships are governed by the need to avoid conflicts of interest, as enshrined in McGill's *Regulation on Conflict of Interest*. This is a minimal duty. We support this duty but feel that the needs of a professional environment and the flourishing of students require additional self-regulation by professional actors.

As per the University's *Policy on Sexual Violence*, if an instructor has a romantic or sexual relationship with a graduate student under their instruction, any supervisory or teaching relationship will be ended. A management plan will then be put in place with consideration of equity issues in the department as they affect teaching staff and students. The supervisor should be removed from any committees where their intimate or romantic relationship with a student has potential to negatively impact the studies, research and professional opportunities of other graduate students in the program. Under no circumstances should a management plan

be implemented in which teaching staff are given fewer committee and other service duties as a result of their offence. Disciplinary procedures may be pursued, depending on circumstances.

The University's *Policy on Sexual Violence* further states that if a member of the teaching staff has an intimate relationship with an undergraduate or graduate student who is not under their instruction, supervision or authority, but is nevertheless enrolled in the Faculty of Arts or any Faculty where the instructor holds an appointment, then the instructor must also immediately report this relationship to the Chair of their home department. Section 8.1 (iii) of McGill University's *Policy on Sexual Violence* exempts graduate students from this reporting obligation.

The disclosure must be in writing following the process prescribed by *the Regulation on Conflict of Interest*. In such cases, a management plan will be implemented to ensure that the instructor has no academic authority or influence over the student concerned.

The following are specific practices to which we are committed in order to foster a respectful, professional environment for students, staff and faculty:

- Meetings with students should ideally take place in institutional spaces. Teaching staff have a responsibility to consider student security and well-being for any proposed meeting in non-institutional spaces. Students must have the freedom to say no or suggest alternative meeting spaces without fear of repercussions, or academic disadvantages in terms of learning and professional development opportunities.
- On occasions where teaching staff and students engage with one another in social settings, whether internal or external to the University including at department-wide social events, lecture receptions and conferences, teaching staff bear the responsibility for conducting themselves with integrity and professionalism, recalling the McGill Charter of Student Rights and all other regulations and policies governing interactions with students at the university.
- Teaching staff must also conduct themselves with integrity and professionalism in all communications, including emails, with students. Professors should respect student time and privacy. For example, communications requiring a response should ideally be confined to regular business hours (typically anywhere from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.) and it is inappropriate for a professor to ask a student to friend them on social media.
- Departmental events need to be sensitive to a diversity of cultural and personal contexts, which may preclude the consumption of alcohol or certain foods. Alternatives need to be readily available.

VII. Responsibility to Refer

The Chair, Undergraduate Program Director, the Graduate Program Director, the Director of Classics, as well as the Chair of the Governance and Equity Committee of the Department of History and Classical Studies, will receive full training on legal and ethical responsibilities regarding the reporting and disclosure of information shared by students. They will serve as a resource on these matters for staff and students alike.

Teaching staff, administrative and support staff have a responsibility to refer students in distress to on-campus or off-campus resources.

When dealing with students in distress, follow these Guidelines developed by the Dean of Students.

- Establish proper rapport by listening.
- Do not ask too many questions.
- Do not overstep boundaries.
- Ask if the student is already connected to a McGill Student Service, and if not, provide them with information or refer them to a departmental equity officer.
- If a student is connected, ask if you may call that service (e.g. Counselling Services, Student Health Services, Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support, and Education, SACOMSS (Sexual Assault Center of the McGill Students' Society), Legal Information Clinic at McGill, Senior Equity and Inclusion Advisor)
- To report or complain about a sexual violence incident, students, faculty, administrative and support staff should contact Maître Caroline Lemay, Special Investigator (Sexual Violence): mcgill.si@omega-ombs.ca. (Current as of September 2018).

In case of an emergency or a crisis involving McGill students, as individuals or as a group, on campus, or anywhere in the world, the Office of the Dean of Students is the main contact.

Everyone needs to be made aware that disclosure (i.e. someone telling you something) is not the same as an official report and this difference needs to be made especially clear to students. If a student tells a member of staff about an incident, it is privileged information and staff members should direct students towards the resources above for support and/or options for action. Student privacy and taking measures to ensure that students do not have to repeat their account should always be taken into consideration.

VIII. Revisions and Updates

This Statement of Principles of Professional Conduct will be reviewed annually at the first meeting of the calendar year. Any recommended changes, approved by the department, will be addressed by the department's Equity and Governance Committee, with consultations with teaching, administrative and support staff and students when deemed necessary, and submitted for approval by vote within three months of the initial meeting.