Code of ethics for student teachers

A. Preamble – A student-centred perspective

Mandate:

A joint subcommittee consisting of members from two standing committees of the Faculty of Education (Faculty of Education Ethical Review Board and Student Standing) was created to develop a Code of Ethics for Student Teachers and to examine the ways in which this Code will be communicated to students, faculty members and educational partners.

Goals and rationale:

The interests of the two Standing Committees of the Faculty of Education in promoting appropriate ethical and professional conduct have led us to develop the following Code of Ethics for Student Teachers. This code seeks to respond to, and address the following needs:

- The Code addresses the interdependent duties, rights and responsibilities of student teachers, faculty members and educational partners.
- By addressing common issues and needs, the Code seeks to articulate and make explicit ethical principles that transcend disciplinary boundaries. These principles reflect the fundamental values that are expressed in the duties, rights and responsibilities of all involved in Teacher Education.
- The Code requires a reasonable flexibility in the implementation of common principles. It is designed to help those involved in Teacher Education, as a matter of sound ethical reasoning, to understand and respect the contexts in which they work and accommodate the needs of others.
- The Code seeks to encourage continued reflection and thoughtful response to ethical issues. It does not seek definitive answers to all ethical questions or situations. Rather, it seeks to outline the guiding principles to ethical conduct and to identify major issues which are essential to the development and implementation of this Code.

Context of an ethics framework for student teachers

The principles and norms guiding ethical conduct are developed within an ever-evolving complex societal context, elements of which include the need for reflective action and ethical principles.

Education is premised on a fundamental moral commitment to advance and construct knowledge and to ensure human understanding and respect for individual and collective well being and integrity.
The moral imperative of respect translates into the following ethical principles that assume a student-centred perspective as articulated in the Quebec Curriculum Reform and Competencies outlined for Teacher Education.

B. Academic freedom and responsibilities

Teachers enjoy, and should continue to enjoy important freedoms and privileges. However, with freedoms come responsibilities and ethical challenges. This Code of Ethics is in keeping with the philosophy and spirit of the New Directions that are embedded in the document Teacher Training: Orientations, Professional Competencies (Ministère de l’Éducation 2001) and the reflective practice literature.

The role of the teacher and the contexts of teaching have changed. Thus, new resources (knowledge, skills, attitudes) are required to practice the profession and meet the challenges of teaching and learning in whatever contexts student teachers may find themselves and to engage in professional development individually and with others.

C. Ethics and law

“Teaching is governed by a legal and regulatory framework” (MEQ p. 120). The law affects and regulates the standards and norms of teaching behaviors in a variety of ways such as respecting privacy, confidentiality, intellectual property, competence. Human rights legislation prohibits discrimination and recognizes equal treatment as fundamental to human dignity and well being. Teachers should respect the spirit of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms particularly the sections dealing with life, liberty and the security of the person as well as those involving equality and discrimination and the Education Act that sets out the obligations and rights of teachers.

D. Guiding ethical principles

Ethical student teachers should respect the following guiding ethical principles:

1. Respect for human dignity
   o Speaks and acts towards all students with respect and dignity; and deals judiciously with them at all times, always mindful of their individual rights and personal sensibilities.
   o Respects the dignity and responsibilities of cooperating teachers, peers, principals, parents and other professionals or para-professionals within the school, school board and community.

2. Respect for vulnerable persons
   o Respects and recognizes ethical obligations towards vulnerable persons. This principle recognizes that students are in a vulnerable position and that student teachers are in a privileged relationship with students and their families and will always refrain from exploiting that relationship in any form or manner.

3. Respect for confidentiality and privacy
o Respects the confidential nature of all information related to students and their families and will share such information in an appropriate manner only with those directly concerned with their welfare.

o Respects the confidential nature of all information related to all school personnel and will share such information in an appropriate manner.

4. Respect for justice
   o Respects and recognizes the right of individuals to be treated with fairness and equity and the importance of avoiding conflicts of interest.

5. Respect for safety of students
   o Respects the right of individuals to expect that student teachers will engage in practices that aim to ensure the physical, psychological and emotional safety of students.

6. Respect for existing ethical codes and professional standards
   o Respects the authority, roles and responsibilities of the cooperating teacher and agrees to adhere to the responsibilities and obligations for teachers as outlined in the Education Act, Faculty and University handbooks as well as all local agreements by host school boards and schools.

7. Balancing harm and benefits
   o Acknowledges that any potentially harmful practices (e.g., Science Labs and Physical Education Activities) must be balanced with anticipated benefits and conducted in a prudent informed manner.

Writing committee members for the code of ethics

Associate Deans Mary Maguire, Christopher Milligan,
Professors Spencer Boudreau, Elizabeth Wood, Jon Bradley, Ron Morris, Myrna Hynes,
Greg Reid

Approved by
Faculty Council
Academic Policy Committee
Faculty of Education Ethics Review Board
Student Standing Committee