



Guidelines for Faculty/Student Interaction

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In pursuing its mission of excellence in music performance and research, the Schulich School of Music is committed to fostering [equity, diversity and inclusion](#). Since each individual in our community is unique, it is difficult to be aware of all hidden biases, privileges and constraints. Consultation will be sought periodically so that the guidelines reflect an inclusive and equitable approach representing our diverse community. To make a culture change which is effective and sustainable over time, patience, empathy, understanding and respect are required from every member of our community.

This document defines shared standards of behaviour, not rules and consequences. The point is to lay out a common framework for respectful dialogue and the resolution of misunderstandings. Those who experience inappropriate behaviour should start by speaking with the parties involved and appealing to these best practice guidelines. If the issue is not resolved, speak with the next person in the chain of responsibility, or consult with an [Equity Advisor](#). Disciplinary action is a last resort and will only be initiated if deemed necessary by the Disciplinary Officer (for students) or supervisor (for staff).

These guidelines are meant to supplement existing university-wide [policies](#) (included in each section) and highlight issues specific to music instruction.

Four Issues of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:

[I. Power and Voices](#)

[II. Cultures](#)

[III. Bodies and Identity](#)

[IV. Disability](#)

[V. Policies and Resources](#)

I. POWER AND VOICES

Key concepts:

- Maintain professionalism.
- Foster an atmosphere that encourages participation by all.
- Recognize imbalances of power and avoid placing anyone at a disadvantage due to structures of authority.

A. General principles

- Be aware of power dynamics, whether among faculty or between faculty and students.
- Try to empower every individual to speak and recognize that disempowered individuals often do not feel comfortable doing so.
- Be open to criticism and avoid being dismissive.
- Maintain professionalism in speech; establish boundaries with students and colleagues regarding communication channels.
- Make every effort to respect privacy. Requests for confidentiality must be respected.
- Faculty: When allocating ad hoc positions, performance opportunities, etc., strive to make such opportunities well-publicized and open to all interested students, where appropriate. Aim for transparency in evaluation procedures.
- Students: Whenever issues arise, be aware of and follow the chain of responsibility below. As a first step, appeal to the responsible person closest to the issue. If the issue remains unresolved, proceed to the next step in the chain, or consult with an [Equity Advisor](#):
 - Instructor → Area Coordinator → Department Chair → Associate Dean, Academic and Student Affairs *or* Associate Dean, Graduate Studies → Dean
 - The following student associations can also offer support for the resolution of an issue (keeping students' identity private if desired): Music Undergraduate Students' Association ([MUSA](#)), Music Graduate Students' Society ([MGSS](#)), Music Education Undergraduate Students' Association ([MEDUSA](#)).

B. Communication

1. Verbal:

a. Within the university setting:

- Speak in a respectful manner.
- Avoid language that can negatively affect others, such as racist or sexist comments (e.g., "play like a man").
- Be mindful of how your words can affect the student/teacher relationship and the learning environment.
- Respect boundaries and keep the lines of communication open.
- Encourage the use of gender-inclusive language, such as "they/them" pronouns. (Instead of "women sing the melody, men sing the bass line," find alternatives such as "high voices/low voices" or "soprano-alto/tenor-bass.")
- Faculty: Maintain an atmosphere of respect for all students regardless of level or ability.
- Students: It's better not to address instructors on a first name basis unless invited to do so. (This applies to verbal and written forms of communication.)

b. In community activities outside of McGill (e.g., professional engagements involving both instructors and students)

- Keep in mind that although you are not in school, you are still representing the McGill community.
- Continue to respect others' boundaries when outside of McGill.
- Avoid making disparaging comments about McGill community members. Belittling or derogatory comments are not conducive to an inclusive environment.
- If it comes to your attention that there is interaction that is disrespectful, inequitable, or inappropriate, please contact an Equity Advisor
- Avoid excessive consumption of alcohol and/or cannabis. Be mindful of the possible negative effects of such activities.

2. Written:

- As much as possible, the use of McGill email should be the preferred method of communication. There may be situations where text messaging by cell phone or social media is more efficient, but be sure to seek consent from your correspondents, as they may not be comfortable with it.
- Always use respectful language.
- Familiarize yourself with McGill's [Policy on E-mail Communication with Students](#).

3. Social media platforms:

- Faculty and students who interact on social media should be mindful that their online communications might be construed as an extension of their classrooms and their teacher- student relationships and should avoid communications (e.g., disparaging remarks, arguments, political endorsements) that would be inappropriate in formal teaching contexts.
- Be aware that in social media, the boundaries between personal and professional communication can blur. Avoid behaviour that would make it difficult for you to maintain a professional relationship.
- Be mindful of the public and permanent nature of postings.
- Always be respectful.

C. Guidelines for Studio Reassignment Requests:

- Ideally, studio reassignment should only happen between academic terms.
- Any student wishing to request studio reassignment should first contact their Area Coordinator (if the student's teacher is the Area Coordinator, they should contact the Performance Department Chair).
- Ideally, a conversation should happen between the student and their current teacher; if necessary, that conversation can be mediated by the Area Coordinator or the Department Chair.
- Having advised the Area Coordinator, the student can contact other instructors in their area to request a conversation about possible reassignment.
- With the agreement of the Area Coordinator, current teacher and the instructor to whom

they wish to be reassigned, the student should indicate their teacher preference (and add comments as necessary on reasons for requesting a reassignment) when they fill out their online private lesson request form in the spring; alternatively, they can write to teacherpreference.music@mcgill.ca.

- Cases of personal conflict that render working relationships impossible in the middle of an academic term should be brought to the attention of the Performance Department Chair, who will advise on a course of action or refer the matter to the Area Coordinator.
- Be aware of power dynamics that can arise when students switch studios.
- Both faculty and students should avoid behaviour that might be perceived as retaliation.

II. CULTURES

Key concepts:

- Create a safe space for learning.
- Guard against oppression or discrimination based on race, culture, religion or politics.
- Respect how individuals choose to identify themselves.

A. General principles

- Treat people of all cultural backgrounds equitably. Respect and understand the unique cultural perspectives of students/faculty/staff from all racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Avoid making assumptions about people based on their backgrounds.
- Respect differences of religion and politics in the classroom and in communications.
- Avoid racially charged language.
- Be aware that disparaging or derogatory remarks targeting any religious/cultural/political group may adversely affect perceptions of safety and inclusion in the classroom or workplace on the part of students, faculty, or staff.
- Be aware that the same musical artifact may have different resonance or impact for different people (e.g., if it touches on histories of cultural oppression such as racism or sexism). When discussing sensitive content, maintain expectations of respectful dialogue. Critical discussion is better than routine content warnings.
- Don't assume that an individual of a certain culture or racial background, especially a minority, can serve as an ambassador for the entire culture or race. However, people should be allowed to speak up for their culture or race when they feel it is necessary.
- For public events, consider including a [land acknowledgment](#). (For major public events, consult with the School's Communications and Production staff.)

III. BODIES AND IDENTITY

Key concepts:

- Create a safe space for learning.
- Guard against oppression or discrimination based on identity or body image.
- Respect how individuals choose to identify themselves.

A. General principles:

- Respect the physical autonomy of others.
 - Faculty should touch students only with their permission, and only in cases of pedagogical necessity. Have a discussion at the beginning of the collaboration about the level of comfort regarding physical touch and re-evaluate periodically.
 - Avoid commenting on the physical appearance of others.
- Avoid sexually charged language.
- Use the pronouns that individuals feel best reflect their gender identity. (Including your own preferred pronouns on your syllabus gives students an opportunity to disclose their own if they want to.)
- Be respectful of diverse forms of gender and sexual identities (see this [glossary](#) or this [transgender primer](#)). Avoid making assumptions about others' identities. Adopt language that is inclusive of all identities (e.g., gender-inclusive language such as they/them).
- Suggestions regarding attire for professional activities should be made without regard to gender or reference to physical attributes of individuals.

B. Guidelines for touching/consent:

- Human touch can sometimes be a helpful component of instruction in music. For example, to illustrate a point about hand position on an instrument, a professor may ask to reposition a student's hand or fingers.
- Some teachers and students may have experienced touching as a regular and accepted part of their training and pedagogical methods and find it wholly effective. Others may find it unfamiliar or uncomfortable.
- Consider that people experience touch in different ways depending on factors such as cultural background, age, gender and personal experience. Some people may be sensitive to touch due to illness or neurodevelopmental conditions (e.g., autism).
- Since instructors are in positions of power over students, some students may hesitate to withhold permission in order to avoid offending a teacher. Students should be given the opportunity to say "no" without having to divulge the reason or disclose private information.
- Some basic guidelines can help reduce the possibility of misunderstanding or discomfort:
 - Touch should always be restricted only to what is necessary and appropriate for the instructional point.
 - Ask permission every time you would like to touch a student to further your instruction, explaining why and how you would touch the student.
 - Before using touch, give a verbal cue about the touch and its purpose: "May I adjust your wrist so your hand stays more horizontal?"
 - It is never appropriate to touch someone on sensitive areas, such as a student's chest, pelvis, buttocks or upper thigh.

- o Consider alternatives to touch, such as demonstration or verbal description. A description might explain the position or movement of the body part under consideration and of adjacent parts.
- o If a student seems uncomfortable or expresses any concerns about touch, even after initially granting permission for touch, acknowledge the matter. Immediately cease the contact.
- o Even if consent has been given in the past, teachers should not assume that the student feels the same in the present and should ask permission every time.

IV. DISABILITY

Key concepts:

- Remove barriers to learning.
- Avoid ableism, which treats disabilities as a problem, defines people by their disabilities, and characterizes the disabled as inferior.
- Respect how individuals choose to identify themselves.

A. Best practices for faculty:

- Foster an inclusive and accessible environment for students with all levels of disability, including mental health issues and chronic illness.
- Foster an environment that minimizes the stigma associated with disability, empowering students to disclose or discuss their personal experiences as they wish.
- Acknowledge that different people may prefer different terminology with regards to disability and self-identification. Respect the individuals' right to use the vocabulary they choose to describe their experiences.
- Be sensitive to students' preferences and need for accommodations, so as to encourage all students to reach out and discuss any such needs. A student's disability or accommodations should not be discussed with others without the student's explicit consent.
- Respect student accommodations as outlined by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD).
- When designing or revising curriculum, classroom delivery, assignments, or trips outside of school, ensure that your planning creates an inclusive environment for students with diverse abilities.
- Whenever possible, apply principles of [Universal Design for Learning](#), and recognize that accommodations made for people with disabilities often turn out to be broadly useful for other people (e.g., subtitles).
- Some educators support the use of "trigger warnings," specifically to protect trauma survivors and those with post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Be aware that [researchers are divided](#) over whether warnings about troubling content help people who have experienced trauma.

V. POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Resources:

- [Equity Office | Resources](#)
- [Equity Advisors | Music - McGill University](#)
- [Disability and Accessibility | Equity at McGill - McGill University](#)
- [Student Accessibility and Achievement - McGill University](#)
- [Office for Mediation and Reporting - McGill University](#)
- [Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support and Education - McGill University](#)
- [Anti-racism Resources | Equity at McGill - McGill University](#)
- [Indigenous Support | Equity at McGill - McGill University](#)
- [Fostering equity, diversity and inclusion | Supervision - McGill University](#)
- [Building Connections in the Classroom](#) (McGill Teaching and Learning Services, Faculty of Arts)
- [Microaggressions in the Online Classroom](#) (University of British Columbia, Equity & Inclusion Office)
- [Difficult Dialogues](#) (Vanderbilt University, Center for Teaching)
- [Teaching Race: Pedagogy and Practice](#) (Vanderbilt University, Center for Teaching)
- [Resolving Disputes | Student Rights and Responsibilities - McGill University](#)
- [Helping Students in Difficulty – McGill University](#)
- [Communicating with your supervisor | Supervision - McGill University](#)
- [Gender & Sexuality | Equity at McGill - McGill University](#)

Policies:

- [Policy Concerning the Rights of Students with Disabilities - McGill University](#)
- [Policy on Harassment and Discrimination - McGill University](#)
- [Charter of Students' Rights - McGill University](#)
- [Policy concerning Alcohol, Cannabis and Other Drugs - McGill University](#)
- [Policy Against Sexual Violence - McGill University](#)
- [Social media guidelines | Newsroom - McGill University](#)
- Code of Conduct: Romantic and Sexual Relationships between Teaching Staff and Students; see [Policy Against Sexual Violence - McGill University](#), section 8.
- [Guidelines for Discussing Incidents of Hate, Bias, and Discrimination](#) (University of Michigan, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching)