

Department of Philosophy, Equity and Climate Committee

Equity Guidelines

- This document offers guidelines for all members of the department community: undergraduate students, graduate students, teaching assistants and all instructors including postdoctoral fellows, sessional instructors and permanent faculty.
- These guidelines are recommendations for both peer-peer interactions inside and outside the classroom and instructor-student interactions both inside and outside the classroom. They indicate how students and instructors should behave in departmental contexts and hence what behaviour can reasonably be expected from all members of McGill Philosophy department.
- The department has a number of officers who can be contacted to clarify these guidelines, including the Department's Equity Officer, the Chair of the Department, the Director of Graduate Studies and the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

1. Be aware of relevant McGill policies.

The McGill Sexual Violence Policy can be found here:

https://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/files/secretariat/policy_against_sexual_violence.pdf

Other policies that we should be aware of:

- policy on [students with disabilities](#)
- policy on [harassment and discrimination](#)

2. General guidelines

- (i) The departmental environment is a professional environment in which professional standards of behavior apply.
- (ii) The McGill Philosophy department is a pluralistic intellectual community, meaning that faculty and students have expertise in different areas of philosophy. The Department expects that different philosophical approaches and traditions are respected in discourse within the department. For guidelines concerning respectful philosophical discussion in classrooms and seminars that also apply more generally (including to the internet and social media), see e.g. David Chalmers' 'guidelines for respectful, constructive and inclusive philosophical discussion': <http://consc.net/guidelines/>
- (iii) Professionalism should be maintained in the departmental environment. e.g. denigrating or contemptuous language should be avoided (even as a joke),

especially language that stereotypes particular groups ('analytic philosophers,' 'women'), unless denigrating language is the topic of discussion.

- (iv) Confidentiality and respect should be observed in communications with and among colleagues and students. Confidentiality in evaluation practices should be practiced, e.g. the evaluation of others should be limited to confidential contexts (e.g. confidential feedback to students, filling in a course evaluation). In particular, evaluation of others should not take place in public settings or open forums on social media.
- (v) Be aware of the potential for stereotype threat and unconscious implicit biases in our behavior towards and evaluations of others. None of us can eradicate these biases, but it is helpful to be informed about them and to know of ways to mitigate their impact. For helpful resources, see:
<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/philosophy/research/implicit-bias-jennifer-saul-tackling-gender-bias-academia>
https://www.bpa.ac.uk/uploads/2011/02/BPA_Report_Women_In_Philosophy.pdf
- (vi) Request for clarification of any issue in these guidelines, including suggestions for modifications or additions, should be addressed to the department's Equity and Climate Committee by contacting the Chair of the Committee. Any proposals for substantial changes should be presented to the department as a motion, for discussion and a vote. Both the ECC and individual members may make such a motion.
- (vii) Issues arising out of these guidelines may be brought to the attention of the department by contacting either the Chair of the Department or the department's Equity Officer. Issues regarding compliance with university policies will be addressed through university procedures, but may in the first instance be brought to the attention of department officers.

3. Specific guidelines regarding instructor-student interactions

- (i) The instructor-student relationship is a professional relationship and professional standards should be observed, even when the relationship has formally ceased and the student continues to be a student in other philosophy classes or even other departments at McGill.
- (ii) It is important to err on the side of professionalism and formality. Remember that there is a power imbalance in the instructor-student relationship. Instructors are not students' peers or friends. Romantic or sexual relationships between instructors and students are incompatible with this professional relationship and are not permitted under McGill's *Policy Against Sexual Violence*.

- (iii) Be aware of the Code of Conduct in the McGill *Policy Against Sexual Violence*. In particular:

The University is committed to cultivating and maintaining a safe academic environment for students based on integrity and respect. Students have the right to a safe and respectful learning environment that fosters their academic success. Members of the Teaching Staff bear the responsibility of conducting themselves with professionalism and integrity at all times in their contacts with students. The following Code of Conduct applies to all members of the Teaching Staff:

- i) “No member of the Teaching Staff may enter into or initiate a sexual or romantic relationship with a student where the member of Teaching Staff: a. has academic authority over the student; b. has an influence over the student’s academic progress; or c. collaborates academically with the student.”
- (iv) When an individual instructor meets with students the following are standard practices:
- Politeness and civility should be maintained at all times, including in email communication.
 - In private conversations with students, office doors should be left ajar unless the student explicitly permits you to close it.
 - Regular office hours should be held on campus.
 - Regular office hours should be held during business hours (8.00 am to 6.00 pm) unless there is good reason to do otherwise, e.g. holding office hours directly after a late class.
 - Invitations for one-one socializing, even if initiated by a student, should be avoided.
 - Students’ privacy should be respected, e.g. asking personal questions or making assumptions about personal issues in the context of professional discussions should be avoided.
 - Should a student approach you in distress related to an equity issue, you should keep any information they disclose to you confidential unless they explicitly give you permission to share it with someone else. You may suggest to the student that they contact the Equity Officer of the Department; if appropriate (i.e. if you have a concern for the safety or well-being of the student) you may use the Early Alert System of the Office of the Dean of Students on MyCourses. Be aware of resources at McGill to help students who are in distress, for example:
 - the Helping Students in Difficulty flow-chart at: https://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/files/deanofstudents/helping_students_in_difficulty_1.pdf
 - the Student Wellness Hub: <https://mcgill.ca/wellness-hub>

- (v) Be particularly aware of professional conduct over email and on social media, such as:
- Maintain formality even in the relatively informal context of email communications.
 - Avoid communication with students by text message, Facebook or other platforms. Use the official McGill email address unless another address is requested by the student.
 - ‘Friend’ requests should not be sent to students on Facebook or other platforms.
 - Invitations for one-one social contact, even if initiated by a student, should be declined.
 - Respect students’ privacy. Do not ask or invite personal questions on social media.
- (vi) Be aware of classroom dynamics such as the potential for stereotype threat, the role of implicit bias and the need for respectful and constructive behavior in the classroom. It might be useful to draw attention to, e.g. the Chalmers guidelines, and information on stereotype threat and implicit bias (see 2. v above) at the beginning of lectures, conferences and seminars.
- (vii) Be aware of the department’s anonymous grading policy [attach].
- (viii) Consider the diversity of authors in assigning readings for your courses. For resources see:

<https://diversityreadinglist.org/>
<https://projectvox.library.duke.edu>