

**SUBJECT: WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS**

**POLICY:** In order to promote and maintain a safe and respectful college environment, employees of Lethbridge College will not use their position inappropriately in interpersonal relationships with other members of the college community.

**PREAMBLE:**

Lethbridge College promotes trust and respect among members of the college community. In order to promote a positive work / learning environment, employees of Lethbridge College observe and respect the boundaries of workplace relationships. They acknowledge the personal dignity of each member of the college community and accept responsibility for the influence they may have over the physical, social, and mental well-being of other members. They avoid situations in which they use or could be perceived to use their positions of power to unjustly deny benefits or give special advantages to persons under their authority. They work with their supervisors to mitigate situations in which such conditions are unavoidable.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Employees** - Persons on the payroll of Lethbridge College as well as those defined by the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) as an employee: "Employee, in relation to a public body, includes a person who performs a service for the public body as an appointee, volunteer or student or under a contract or agency relationship with the public body."

**Supervisor** - Anyone in any authority position over the employee.

**Students** - Persons registered in a course at Lethbridge College at any location in any delivery model.

**Workplace relationships** - Relationships which are developed and maintained within the work environment at Lethbridge College. This includes, but is not limited to, supervisor to employee, employee to employee, and employee to student relationships.

**Unequal power relationship** - A relationship in which one member has greater authority than the other by virtue of his/her position or his / her control of or access to resources, e.g. a faculty member versus a student; a supervisor versus a supervisee.

**Confidential information** - Information that employees have access to in order to do their jobs that is of a personal, private, or sensitive nature. This type of information includes personal information that may be harmful to personal privacy if disclosed, as well as non-public information that may be of use to competitors of the College or harmful to the College or its stakeholders if disclosed.

## **GUIDELINES:**

1. Employees behave with courtesy, respect, patience, and helpfulness towards others, and work to resolve conflicts arising with other members of the college community.
2. Employees conduct themselves, and encourage others to conduct themselves, in a manner consistent with respect for the personal dignity of individuals, in compliance with all government legislation, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Alberta Human Rights Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act.
3. Employees maintain the confidentiality of information entrusted to them by the College or its stakeholders, and only collect, use, or disclose such information as is required in the fulfillment of their duties, as required by College policy, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP), regulations, or legal proceedings.
4. Employees refrain from engaging in gossip in written or verbal form that would malign or otherwise damage a member of the college community or the reputation of the college.
5. The workplace relationships between employees and students support learning. The unequal power relationship inherent in employee-student relationships increases the vulnerability of the student. Employees will establish and maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students. If an employee is unsure about what are appropriate professional boundaries, he / she should consult with his / her supervisor or Human Resources. To maintain professional boundaries with students, employees *do not*:
  - a. Engage in a sexual and/or intimate relationship with any student over whom they have influence or could be perceived to have influence, unless such relationship is pre-existing and disclosed in writing to the appropriate supervisor.
  - b. Engage in other potentially problematic relationships with any student over whom they have influence or could be perceived to have influence. Such relationships include, but are not limited to, teaching a member of one's immediate family, or a close friend; excessive socializing with students outside of class, either individually or as a group; giving or accepting money and / or substantial gifts from students. If there is any doubt of what is acceptable in terms of gifts, the offer will be declined.
  - c. Use speech or engage in conduct that is reasonably regarded as offensive and substantially impairs the academic and work opportunity of students.
  - d. Embroil students in interpersonal difficulties employees may be having.
6. The unequal power relationship inherent in supervisor-employee relationships increases the vulnerability of the employee. To maintain appropriate professional boundaries with employees, supervisors should be mindful of the development of workplace relationships with an employee, where the employee is likely to misunderstand the terms

of the relationship. To maintain professional boundaries with employees, supervisors *do not*:

- a. Engage in a sexual and / or intimate relationship with any employee over whom they have influence or could be perceived to have influence, unless such relationship is pre-existing and disclosed in writing to the appropriate Administrator for the area as soon as the unequal power relationship occurs.
  - b. Use speech or engage in conduct that is reasonably regarded as offensive and substantially impairs the work environment.
7. Substantiated cases of failure to follow this policy may be cause for disciplinary action up to, and including, termination.

## **PROCEDURES:**

1. In the event that a supervisor receives a written report of conduct which appears to be in conflict with these guidelines, that supervisor, in consultation with Human Resource Services, shall take appropriate action.
2. An employee will report in writing to his / her supervisor or the Vice President, People and Planning any situation in which he / she develops or has an intimate and / or sexual relationship with another member of the college community in which an unequal power relationship exists or could be perceived to exist.
3. The immediate supervisor will contact the Vice President, People and Planning advising them of the situation and seek assistance. If the matter is resolved at this level, the Vice President, People and Planning will ensure a letter is placed on the employee's personnel file with a copy to the employee, indicating the manner in which the matter has been concluded. Personnel files are stored and maintained in Human Resource Services as the official employee record.
4. In the event the issue cannot be mutually resolved, the Vice President, People and Planning will refer the matter to the vice president corporate services and CFO for further required action.

## **REFERENCE:**

### **SAT:**

2009 05 12

### **Cross Reference:**

Academic Freedom: Policy 2.27  
Lethbridge College Code of Conduct Policy  
Records Management Policy  
Respectful Campus Policy  
Procurement Policy  
Student Rights and Code of Conduct