

WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS PROCEDURE

Parent Policy Workplace Relationships Policy #200-1-3

Purpose

The success of Bow Valley College relies on employees fulfilling their roles and responsibilities, as outlined in both the Workplace Relationships Policy and the Respect in the Workplace Policy. Core commitments to positive and healthy workplace relationships include:

- Behaving with courtesy, respect, patience and a helpfulness towards others. This includes working to resolve instances of conflict that may arise with other members of the College community,
- Refrain from engaging in gossip, either written or verbal, that would malign or otherwise damage a member of the College community or the reputation of the College,
- Setting an example of professional conduct in a manner consistent with respect for the personal dignity of individuals, in compliance with all government and Human Rights legislation.

Scope

This applies to all employees, contractors and Board members of the College. It is in effect at any college events, regardless of location or modality (e.g. traditional, distance, online, practicum, work placement, etc.), however procedures may diverge for different groups.

Compliance

Employees, contractors and learners are responsible for knowing, understanding and complying with Bow Valley College policies, procedures and any other attached documentation that relates to their position, employment or enrolment at the College.

Procedures

1.0 Relationships Between College Employees

The unequal power relationship inherent in supervisor-employee relationships increases the vulnerability of the employee and places the supervisor at greater risk for a conflict of interest to occur. To ensure appropriate professional boundaries with employees are maintained, supervisors should be mindful of developing an inappropriate workplace relationship with an employee. In order to maintain professional boundaries with employees, supervisors will not:

- 1.1 Engage in a flirtatious, romantic, sexual and/or intimate relationship with any employee over whom they have influence or could be perceived to have influence.
- 1.2 If a relationship is pre-existing, it must be disclosed in writing to the appropriate Dean or Director for the area as soon as the unequal power relationship occurs.
- 1.3 Use speech or engage in conduct that is reasonably regarded as offensive and substantially impairs the work environment.

Substantiated cases of failing to follow these procedures may be cause for disciplinary action up to, and including termination.

2.0 Relationships Between College Employees and Learners

An unequal power relationship is inherent in all employee - learner relationships, increasing the vulnerability of the learner. All College employees are to establish and maintain firm professional boundaries with learners, as well as take steps to protect themselves from situations in which their relationship with a learner could be perceived as inappropriate.

If an employee is unsure of what appropriate boundaries are, the employee should consult with their supervisor or Human Resources.

Inappropriate boundaries, behaviours, and actions may include, but are not limited to:

- 2.1 Engaging in a romantic, flirtatious, sexual and/or intimate relationship with any learner over whom the employee has influence or could be perceived to have influence over. If such relationship is pre-existing to the time the learner became a member of the College community, the relationship must be disclosed in writing to the appropriate Supervisor and Human Resources.
- 2.2 Engaging in other potentially problematic relationships with learners 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, excessively socializing with learners outside of the class, either individually or as a group.
- 2.3 Giving or accepting money and/or substantial gifts from learners. If there is any doubt of what is acceptable in terms of gifts, the offer is to be declined.
- 2.4 Engaging in conduct that impairs the academic and work opportunity of learners.
- 2.5 Drinking alcohol and/or spending time with learners where the learner may be drinking to excess (at both College events and outside of College events).
- 2.6 Using language, stories, or representations that are unrelated to the learning focus or environment that a learner and instructor are typically engaged in.
- 2.7 Involving learners in interpersonal difficulties employees may be having at work or in their personal lives.

Substantiated cases of failure to follow these procedures may be cause for disciplinary action up to, and including termination.

3.0 Reporting an Incident

- 3.1 Workplace Relationships should be reported to the respective supervisor for each employee in the relationship. In instances of relationships that involve employees in a supervisor-employee (unequal power) relationship, the employee who is in the position of greater influence or authority holds primary responsibility to disclose the relationship to their supervisor and/or Human Resources. This may also include initiating arrangements to address any issues of conflict of interest.
- 3.2 The supervisor is then required to contact Human Resources advising them of the situation and seeking assistance. If the matter is resolved at this level, the Associate Vice-President of Human Resources 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 as official employee records.
- 3.3 Any supervisors who hears or knows of an inappropriate workplace relationship involving one or more employees, or learners, where a potentially compromising

- position, or a conflict of interest, could potentially risk employees' rights to a Respectful Workplace environment, should address these concerns as soon as possible. It is not necessary to receive either a verbal or written complaint, before addressing the situation.
- 3.4 Procedures for employees who want to make a complaint can be found in the Employee Code of Conduct Procedures (#200-1-1). Procedures for learners who want to make a complaint can be found in the Learner Code of Conduct Policy (#500-1-1).
 - 3.5 Bow Valley College is obligated to consult with the affected individuals to seek resolution of all incidents that suggest that something illegal, immoral, unethical, or potentially unsafe for others has occurred. The College will address all complaints received, whether provided in writing or given verbally.
 - 3.6 In the event the issue cannot be mutually resolved, the Associate Vice-President of Human Resources will refer the matter to the appropriate Vice-President, for further action.

Definitions

Employees: Anyone who is employed by Bow Valley College. Bow Valley College pays employees directly which includes reporting their tax information and deductions to the Canada Revenue Agency.

Supervisor: Individuals who hold a position of authority over another employee.

Learners: A person who is currently registered at the College to take courses, whether or not it is for credit. For purposes of this document, "learner" shall be used synonymously for applicants, prospective learners and learners unless specifically noted otherwise.

Workplace Relationships: Relationships that are developed and maintained within the work environment, they may include, but are not limited to relationships between peer colleagues (employee to employee), supervisor to employee, and employee to learner.

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

Conflict of Interest: Any interest which may impinge upon, or may reasonably be seen by others to impinge upon, an employee's or Board member's impartiality in any matter relevant to their duties.

Inappropriate Conduct: Behaviour that impede professional conduct. Such behaviour may include, but are not limited to: conduct that disrupts learning or risks opportunities for learners, creates a negative or uncomfortable work environment, presents a conflict of interest for an employee(s), or limits the delivery of College services. It may also include conduct that creates an atmosphere of hostility, intimidation, discrimination, bullying or disrespect for others.

DATA SHEET

Accountable Officer

Associate Vice-President, Human Resources

Responsible Officer

Associate Vice-President, Human Resources

Approval

Board of Governors of Bow Valley College

Contact Area

Human Resources

Relevant Dates

Approved	November 2009
Effective	November 2009
Next Review	September 2020
Modification History	Reviewed: September 13, 2017 HR & Governance Council Approved: September 26, 2017 Board of Governors

Associated Policy(ies)

- Respectful Workplace Policy (#200-1-11)
- Employee Code of Conduct (#200-1-1)
- Learner Code of Conduct (#500-1-1)
- Ethical Business Practices (#200-1-5)

Directly Related Procedure(s)

- Employee Code of Conduct Procedures (#200-1-1)
- Learner Code of Conduct Procedures (#500-1-1)

Directly Related Guideline(s) (if any)

- Employee Code of Conduct Guidelines (#200-1-1)

Related Legislation

- Alberta Human Rights Legislation
- Canadian Human Rights Legislation

Attachments (Optional)