

Department of History, Classics, and Religion at the University of Alberta

Statement of Principles in Relation to Sexual Violence

Approved in Department Council, January 21, 2021

Introduction: As members of the Department of History, Classics, and Religion at the University of Alberta, we have a shared commitment to contributing to the eradication of sexual violence by providing a respectful, professional, and non-sexualized learning and work environment for students, faculty, and staff. This Statement of Principles outlines best practices and represents our commitment to fostering such an environment.

I. University of Alberta Policies and Procedures

The UofA has three key policies that are central to our Department's efforts to help eradicate sexual violence. The University of Alberta also has mechanisms in place to ensure its members uphold and adhere to these policies.

As members of the UofA community, all instructors, students, and administrative staff in the Department of History, Classics, and Religion must abide by the University of Alberta's Sexual Violence Policy, available [here](#).¹

Each year, all instructors and administrative staff in the Department of History, Classics, and Religion must complete the University of Alberta's Disclosure Report for Conflicts of Interest and Commitment, available [here](#). An important related item is the information document on Consensual Personal Relationships, available [here](#).

Members of the UofA community must also abide by the University of Alberta's Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate Policy, available [here](#). The Department acknowledges the primacy of the University of Alberta's policies and this Statement of Principles does not supersede them.

¹ *Instructors:* Faculty members, postdoctoral fellows, Academic Teaching Staff, and graduate students (including Teaching Assistants) who teach University of Alberta Students.

Students: every person enrolled in undergraduate or graduate courses or programs at the University of Alberta.

Administrative staff: members of the Department of History, Classics, and Religion who assist in the operation of our unit.

II. Training

Training is central to our shared commitment to eliminating sexual violence.

Each academic year, the Department Chair or designate will arrange training about the University's Sexual Violence Policy and how to receive disclosures of sexual violence. All instructors are strongly encouraged to attend, and the expectation is that any new instructors and/or administrative staff will attend. This training will likewise be offered to graduate students once per academic year, and will be mandatory for incoming graduate students.

At the outset of each academic year, the Chair of the Department of History, Classics, and Religion will ensure that all instructors receive a copy of this Statement of Principles. The Chair will also ensure that new employees in Winter, Spring, and Summer semesters receive a copy.

There will also be at least one member of the Department, usually the Chair, who receives administrator-specific training with regard to the University's Sexual Violence Policy.

Anyone can receive a disclosure at any time and those experiencing sexual violence should feel comfortable disclosing to the individual of their choice. We will also have two or three diverse members of the Department designated as willing and trained to receive disclosures of sexual violence.

III. Instructor-Student Relationships

Undergraduate and graduate students in our courses and programs deserve to study in a professional, non-sexualized, and safe environment. The relationship between instructors and students is one of power, trust, and authority. The University's Sexual Violence Policy notes that there is no consent to sexual activity when "it was obtained through the abuse of a position of power, trust or authority."

As a Department, we have a shared commitment to the following principles, as they help foster a safe, respectful, and professional environment for students, staff, and faculty:

- It is inappropriate and unprofessional for an instructor to initiate or begin romantic or sexual interactions with a student currently enrolled in their courses, under their supervision, or assessment.
- The relationship of power, trust, and authority between instructors and students often continues well after a given academic semester ends, not least because

students often request letters of reference, take additional classes, or request honors supervision or graduate supervision from former professors. As such, it is generally inappropriate and unprofessional for an instructor to have romantic or sexual interactions with a student formerly enrolled in their courses.

- It is inappropriate and unprofessional for a full-time continuing instructor to have romantic or sexual interactions with a student enrolled in any of our Department courses or programs, as students deserve a non-sexualized learning environment. Contract instructors, some of whom may be graduate students, should not engage in romantic or sexual interactions that would compromise their ability to carry out their instructional duties appropriately and professionally.
- Instructors should be mindful that romantic relationships or sexual interactions with University of Alberta students in courses or programs outside the Department of History, Classics, and Religion can likewise undermine the non-sexualized learning and work environment that students deserve.
- Instructors should not make sexualized comments about or to students.
- Instructor communications with students, including emails and social media interactions, should model professionalism and respect students' privacy.

Any employee who finds themselves in a situation where an actual or perceived conflict of interest might arise should consult with the Chair as soon as possible.

VI. Commitment to Those Who Have Experienced Sexual Violence

As members of the Department of History, Classics, and Religion, we recognize and acknowledge that sexual violence can have serious and lasting traumatic consequences. We affirm the University of Alberta's commitment to those who have experienced sexual violence, as outlined in the University of Alberta's [Sexual Violence Policy](#)

VII. Revisions and Updates

This Statement of Principles of Professional Conduct was written, revised, and adopted in a collective Department effort. It will be reviewed annually at the first Department Council meeting of the academic year. The Chair will also ensure that all members of Department Council have an accurate list of the supports available on campus, including the Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights, the Sexual Assault Center, and ACCESS Open Minds.