



## OTHER PERSONAL INTERACTIONS

Instructors have different styles in interacting with students and these often vary in the level of formality. While there is nothing wrong with being friendly with students (and in fact this can convey to students that *you* are

# Healthy Boundaries with Students

A guide for anyone in a position of trust and/or authority to students including in a teaching, coaching, and/or supervisory role.

**DALHOUSIE  
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## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

Navigating healthy relationships with students can be complex and may involve a variety of roles including teacher, advisor, mentor, and counsellor. Individuals have different personal styles in how they interact with students and students come with a variety of expectations of their relationships with members of the university community. There is no single “right” way to interact with students. Instructors need to develop an approach that is comfortable for them and for the students they teach.

It is important to recognize the power dynamics that exist between and within those in a position of trust and/or authority and students. These power dynamics can be illustrated, for example, in grading, thesis supervision, and the provision of references for graduate and professional schools or employment and the fact that some students will hold them in high esteem because of their position at the institution. It is the responsibilities of the person in a position of trust and/or authority to maintain a professional relationship at all times.

Under the law, *teachers* are viewed as being in a position of trust with respect to their students. They have a duty to avoid any conflict of interest and to exercise their powers over students only in the interests of the students and not in their own interests.

It should be noted that the concerns outlined here can also be present in other types of relationships including, for example, concerns outlined