

Queer McGill Safer Space Policy

This policy was adapted from the Queer Concordia Safer Space Policy and the coordinating body of Queer McGill is immensely grateful to the Queer Concordia board of 2016-2017, who contributed enormous time and effort towards creating the base of this policy

1. Table of Contents

Statement of Intent	1
Categories of Offences	2
Disciplinary Measures	3
Reasonable Suspicion	5
Harm Reduction	5
Invitation to leave/ Invitation to resign	6
Online Policy	6
Coordinating Body Member Conduct	7
External Organizations	8
Queer McGill Incident Report	9

2. Statement of Intent

This policy provides a safe space for all who enter the Queer McGill (QM) office and all events organized or sponsored by Queer McGill. The elected members of the coordinating body will enforce and uphold the standards of this policy as stated below. The purpose of this policy is to create a harassment-free space that is without; physical violence and/or threats, verbal aggression, disruptive and/or invasive behavior, intentional destruction of the office, theft, sexual harassment or discriminatory behaviour and remarks (as further expanded upon below)

Queer McGill actively works towards creating an inclusive space aware of intersectionality and privilege based on race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender identities, age, dis/abilities, and bodily variations. We recognize your right to use the names and pronouns of your choice. QM acknowledges that this list may not be all encompassing but will address any additions that may be brought to its attention.

Racist, homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, sexist, sizeist, ageist, ableist, sex-negative, sex worker-negative, food consumption negative and other discriminatory attitudes and/or behaviours will not be tolerated within any QM space or event.

Queer McGill actively works to create an inclusive environment for people with mobility needs.

While we maintain a non-judgemental stance towards recreational use of drugs and alcohol, these substances are not permitted in the Queer McGill office.

Police Involvement:

Queer McGill is aware of the systematic oppression often propagated by police forces in violent acts against people of color, women and members of the LGBTQIA+ communities, among others. However, police involvement within QM spaces or events will not be barred or discouraged in individual cases. Queer McGill is a student-based group of undergraduate students and is not equipped to de-escalate, mediate or give legal advice regarding conflict. All efforts will be made to avoid police involvement, however, in instances of a conflict that cannot be mediated alone by the coordinating body, either SSMU security or campus security (or both) will be involved and these parties may recommend police involvement.

Queer McGill will cooperate with police forces in cases of sexual assault with the consent of the affected party. QM believes that discouraging any victims of assault (be it of physical, verbal or sexual nature) from seeking police involvement often perpetuates systems of oppression which suppress the voices of disprivileged parties in favour of abusers. However, if one does not wish to involve police, QM will provide individuals with support and resources upon request.

Constituent Conduct:

Queer McGill believes that all communications should occur peacefully, with open-mindedness and allowing everyone to be heard. Constructive criticism and dissent are welcome, but should

be focused on the issue and not the person. Personal attacks and false and defamatory accusations will not be accepted. Be aware of the language you use in discussion and how you relate to others. Be conscious that people may understand your words differently than you intended, and that you may be taking up space in conversations that may be more appropriately designated to other folks in the conversation.

3. Categories of Offences

Disrespectful Speech: (Mild)

Any language perceived as being disrespectful towards an individual or group of people.

Offensive language: (Moderate)

Any language that is—but not limited to—abusive, discriminatory or oppressive speech will not be tolerated on the grounds of our safer space policy.

Hate speech: (Severe)

Any speech, gesture, conduct, writing or display that may incite violence or has the intention to incite violence and/or prejudicial action will not be tolerated.

Assault: (Severe)

Any intentional act that may cause QM members to suffer physical harm. Placing another person in fear of assault is an act that QM will not tolerate and will consider with the same severity of an actual assault.

Assault can be defined as; and is not limited to; provocation, intimidation, brutality, injuring and threats, including invading someone's personal space or using a threatening tone of voice.

Sexual Violence: (Severe)

Queer McGill will use the term "Sexual Violence", as a term to encompass forms of sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual harassment.

We will define Sexual Violence in accordance to the Government of Ontario document "Changing Attitudes, Changing Lives: Ontario Sexual Violence Plan" (2011), is as follows:

"Sexual violence is ... any violence, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. This violence takes different forms including sexual abuse, assault, rape, incest, childhood sexual abuse and rape during armed conflict. It also includes sexual harassment, stalking, indecent or sexualized exposure, degrading sexual imagery, voyeurism, cyber harassment, trafficking and sexual exploitation"

Queer McGill has the responsibility to outline all possible options for the reporting and proceedings including legal charges, formal complaint to the university, and/or a ban from QM spaces and events. Queer McGill will allow for the individual who discloses an incident to decide without coercion or intimidation.

Queer McGill understands that we operate in a society that caters to abusers and will take all measures to make QM and its corresponding spaces abuse-free and survivor-centered.

Queer McGill acknowledges that assault is intersectional with matters of sexuality, race and gender expression.

In QM safe spaces, the definition of consent will be based on the University of Michigan Policy on Sexual Misconduct by Students (2016) which defines consent as:

“a clear and unambiguous agreement, expressed in mutually understandable words or actions, to engage in a particular activity. Consent can be withdrawn by either party at any point.”

In addition, consent must also be:

1. **Active** - lack of a “no” is not the same as a “yes,” and only an affirmative response constitutes consent;
2. **Based on equal power** - someone in a vulnerable position cannot consent;
3. **A choice** - no one should be pressured into a decision; and
4. **A process** - consent must be ongoing, and an individual has the right to change their mind at any point.

4. Disciplinary Measures

Disciplinary measures are any measures taken after any member violates any of Queer McGill’s safer space policy. These measures assure that any of these spaces or events will continue to remain safe for constituents and coordinating body members. Disciplinary measures will range from vocal warnings to full and continuous space bans.

Categories of discipline:

Informal Call-Out (Mild):

A passing conversation which resolves the use of problematic language or conduct through respectful discussion between any two individuals occupying QM spaces and events. This includes coordinating body member to constituent, coordinating body member to coordinating body member, constituent to constituent, and constituent to coordinating body member.

Vocal warning (moderate):

A warning that informs a constituent or coordinating body member that their verbal or physical action is in opposition to our safer space policy or general health and safety concerns. Coordinating body members and constituents can receive up to two vocal warnings.

A single **vocal warning** serves as an objective punishment if taken into consideration by a constituent or coordinating body member who will IMMEDIATELY cease to perform whatever action was deemed offensive. If a constituent or coordinating body member DOES NOT IMMEDIATELY CEASE their actions by two **vocal warnings** they will be subjected to further disciplinary action, as written below.

Coordinating body members are required to give:

- i. A clear, understandable explanation of the infraction.
- ii. A clear, understandable explanation of the consequences of receiving a **vocal warning**.
- iii. The warning must be given with two coordinating body members present

Compulsory exit warning:

A **compulsory exit warning** requires that a constituent or coordinating body member be requested to exit a Queer McGill space or event. While often preceded by a **vocal warning**, a **compulsory exit warning** may be used without a **vocal warning** for a severe offence (refer to section 2, [Categories of Offences](#) for an outline of what constitutes a severe offence)

Any coordinating body member who utilizes a **compulsory exit warning** is required to:

- i. Give a clear, understandable explanation of the infraction; and
- ii. Give a clear, understandable explanation of the consequences inherent to receiving a **compulsory exit warning** and any further punishment
- iii. The warning must be given with two coordinating body members present

No use of force by a coordinating body member or another constituent will be allowed.

Non- permanent Ban:

A WRITTEN warning that requires a constituent or coordinating body member not to attend any Queer McGill events or spaces for an amount of time stipulated by the coordinating body.

A **non-permanent banning warning** is required to be voted by the coordinating body and passed by coordinating body majority. If the infraction was committed by coordinating body member, this coordinating body member will not be counted to majority.

- i. A **non-permanent ban** will be notified to the constituent or coordinating body member who committed the infraction by means of email or other written media.
- ii. In case of a lack of written contact, coordinating body members will remain vigilant and provide the constituent(s) with a typed statement of their ban from the space and the length of the ban.

Immediate Ban (severe):

A WRITTEN ban that requires a constituent or other coordinating body member to permanently prohibit their attendance in or at, Queer McGill events and/or spaces. While often anteceded by a **vocal warning** or a **compulsory exit ban**, an immediate ban may be used without their antecedence.

An **immediate ban warning** is required to be voted by the coordinating body and passed by coordinating body majority. If the infraction was committed by coordinating body member, this coordinating body member will not be counted towards majority

- i. An **immediate ban** will be notified to the constituent or coordinating body member who committed the infraction by means of email or other written media.
- ii. In case of a lack of written contact, coordinating body members will remain vigilant and provide the constituent(s) with a typed statement of their ban from the space and the length of the ban.

Suspension (Severe):

A suspension is an immediate removal of coordinating body members or constituent from any responsibilities in the Queer McGill coordinating body. This is only applicable to coordinating body members or QM volunteers, and can be used in conjunction with or without antecedence to any other punishment measures. These measures will be voted by the coordinating body and passed by majority.

A coordinating body member who is suspended will:

- i. Be REMOVED AND PROHIBITED from any Queer McGill responsibilities as outlined in the Queer McGill Constitution.
- ii. Will no longer have voting privileges within the Queer McGill coordinating body

A suspension can be removed by coordinating body vote and passed by the majority.

5. Reasonable Suspicion

Reasonable suspicion applies to all submitted incident reports of any offenses. In order to uphold a Safer Space and protect the majority of constituents, the Queer McGill coordinating body holds the immediate right to ban, suspend or require immediate exit for any coordinating body members or constituents accused of offenses; pending a full external investigation.

6. Harm Reduction

In addition to having a majority of coordinating body members at all Queer McGill events, there will be two or more members appointed to be sober during the entire event. Sober can be defined as not having consumed drugs and/or alcohol.

Sober coordinators will be identifiable and visible (e.g. colourful armbands, buttons, etc):

- i. They will act as a resource for attendees; e.g. safer space info, safer sex supplies.
- ii. They will be responsible for maintaining the safer space policy, and upholding its rules.
- iii. They will help diffuse or intervene in harmful situations, and be potential witnesses.
- iv. They will be the first point of contact for any attendee to report a safer space policy violation to, and will handle the report according to the safer space policy

7. Invitation to leave/ Invitation to resign

In the case of undisclosed severe issues, a constituent accused of participating in an offense will be asked to not attend an event. This will be decided after deliberation by the coordinating body in conjunction with the person to each these actions were perpetrated.

Email Structure:

Hello,

On behalf of Queer McGill [and whoever else is asking person to not attend if applicable], we request you not attend the upcoming [insert event name] event on [date]. The Queer McGill coordinating body members) feel that your presence may threaten our safer space policy. Our policy is attached to this email. Should you have any questions about this request, our policy, or anything else, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Signed,

Queer McGill Coordinating Body of Directors

8. Online Policy

The policy laid out encompasses our safer space policy while in online spaces including but not limited to the Facebook page, associated Facebook groups, Twitter, Instagram and the website.

- i. Safer space. Racist, homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, sexist, sizeist, ageist, ableist, food consumption negative and other discriminatory attitudes and/or behaviours will not be tolerated within any space, physical or online, that is moderated by Queer McGill.
- ii. Spam. Repeat posting of the same off-topic posts and spamming of links that have nothing to do with the subject will be banned. This may also apply to people or organisations who frequently post external links or propaganda without adding to the quality of the discussion online. Memberships created solely for these purposes will be banned.
- iii. Autonomy and self-promotion. Any statement or declaration not released through QM and made public online should be considered independent of Queer McGill. Self-promotional links to one's own blog, video channel, product, business, etc., even if related to QM, are limited to one's own forum signature and user profile.
- iv. On topic. If something is posted which is unrelated to the original topic then it may be removed, or moved to a relevant thread by the moderators, in order to keep the thread on track. Before posting, please ask yourself if you are making a contribution to the discussion and if you are posting in the right thread.

- v. Banning. Posts that do not respect the above Safer Space Policy will be removed immediately. Users who repeatedly ignore the above guidelines will be informed that if they continue, they will be banned. Users who have been notified but continue to ignore the guidelines will be banned. According to the situation a ban can be temporary or indefinite.
- vi. Administrators. The point of moderation is not to limit discussion, or to promote or suppress points of view. The goal of moderation is to keep the forums enjoyable and free from issues that detract from the aim of the media platforms and the experiences of users. Should an administrator abuse their position, the other administrators can collectively decide to withdraw their administrator status. In these cases the coordinating body will convene and discuss the incident(s) of the administrator.
- vii. Responsibility. The behaviour of one member is not an excuse for another to not respect the Safer Space Policy. These guidelines are a collective responsibility: everyone is personally responsible for their own behaviour. The moderators cannot read all posts so they rely on members to report problems that they encounter.

9. Coordinating Body Member Conduct

Members of the coordinating body respect the dignity and rights of all. They are responsible for ensuring that their conduct is always without prejudice as to racism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, sexism, sizeism, ageism, ableism food consumption negative and other discriminatory attitudes and/or behaviours.

Coordinating body members demonstrate commitment to their professional development and to learning. They are responsible for acquiring and applying new knowledge to the Queer McGill Spaces.

Coordinating body members work with colleagues and other professionals to create learning environments in which members feel that they are physically, psychologically, socially, and culturally secure. They are responsible for collaborating to support all aspects of member development in Queer McGill environments.

Coordinating body Members acknowledge that their relationship with constituents is based on trust. They are responsible for maintaining a professional relationship that is characterized by respect, confidentiality, and an absence of exploitation. They will not disclose confidential information about other members and their families, except in cases where law or personal security requires this.

Coordinating body Members value the professional reputation and abilities of their fellow coordinating body members. They are responsible for working with them to promote member development and achieve organization goals.

10. External Organizations

Queer McGill holds the right to not work or hold events with organizations that break our Safer Space policy.

Queer McGill Incident Report

Date of Report Filed (MM/DD/YY): ____/____/____

Date of, or Awareness of, Incident (MM/DD/YY): ____/____/____

Name of Person Filing Report: _____

Legal Name (If Different from Chosen Name): _____

Contact Information: Email: _____ (and/or) Phone Number: _____

Name of Person Filing Report: _____

Legal Name (If Different from Chosen Name): _____

Contact Information: Email: _____ (and/or) Phone Number: _____

Name of Affected Party: _____

Legal Name (If Different from Chosen Name): _____

Report Being Filed Against: _____

Legal Name (If Different from Chosen Name): _____

INCIDENT BEING FILED

Desired Outcome: _____

Is This the First Time You Are Filing a Report of Similar Nature?: YES/NO

Name and Signature of Person(s) Filing Report

Name and Signature of Coordinating Body Member Receiving Report: