

Scented products guideline

Version 3

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Seneca Polytechnic is committed to a safe and healthy working and learning environment for students, employees and external stakeholders. Seneca will take reasonable measures to accommodate individuals with demonstrated scent, chemical or environmental sensitivities and allergies.

Seneca is a large, complex, public institution and has limited ability to control otherwise safe exposures to a variety of substances, the source of which may be construction, building furnishings, valid chemical processes and uses, residential activities, and personal practices. The institution will make reasonable efforts to reduce or, where possible, eliminate the use of scented products.

This guideline applies to Seneca students, employees, contractors and visitors, at all Seneca campuses, buildings and residences and is intended to:

- increase the awareness about the potential impact of products that contain scents or fragrance chemicals, including negative impacts on health, well-being, and productivity
- ask for voluntary co-operation towards a scent-reduced environment
- provide guidance to students and employees to follow when dealing with issues related to individuals who may have scent, chemical or environmental sensitivities and allergies.

Background

For most people, exposure to scents or fragrances is not a problem. However, the presence of materials that contain and emit scents or fragrances may affect the comfort level and/or health of those with pre-existing conditions.

For individuals with pre-existing conditions, such as chemical or environmental sensitivities, migraines, asthma, or allergies, exposure to some scents or fragrances can trigger a range of adverse health effects. Although the processes by which fragrances and chemicals act to bring about symptoms are not yet understood, the impact on those affected can be quite severe, resulting in health difficulties, as well as negative impacts on study and work

activities.

Symptoms these individuals may experience include headaches, dizziness, nausea, light-headedness, fatigue, weakness, insomnia, malaise, confusion, loss of appetite, depression, anxiety, numbness, upper respiratory symptoms, shortness of breath, difficulty with concentration and/or skin irritation.

The following is a list of common scented products and potential environmental agents/irritants that may contribute to an individual's scent sensitivity:

- personal hygiene products, such as scented soaps, shampoos, conditioners, hairsprays, deodorants (spray and stick), colognes, aftershaves, fragrances, perfumes, lotions, body sprays and cosmetics
- industrial chemicals and cleaners, such as floor waxes and strippers
- building materials, such as new carpets, furniture, paints and stained wood products
- foods, plants and other organic material
- tobacco smoke and related products
- other substances not normally thought of as noxious

Raising scent awareness in the Seneca community

Students, employees contractors and visitors will be informed of this guideline through brochures, notices on digital displays, and other communication methods.

Working towards a scent-reduced environment

Seneca will make every reasonable effort to:

- source products that have minimal/low fragrance, meet health and safety standards and have a direct positive impact on indoor air quality
- schedule cleaning, maintenance, and renovation projects associated with an atypical odour during times with reduced occupancy and to notify occupants of the affected areas before such activities and projects occur

Individuals are asked to:

- be considerate of those who may be sensitive to scents and avoid using scented personal products in open and personal office areas, especially those products that give off chemical based scents like air fresheners and potpourris
- use scented personal products sparingly and not apply them in a public area

Reporting guideline

Employees

Employees who feel adversely affected by scents in the workplace and who may be experiencing scent, chemical or environmental sensitivities should report their concern and the circumstances of their condition to their supervisor.

The supervisor will investigate and work to resolve the issue. This may involve speaking with and seeking co-operation from all parties involved. A supervisor's response to a situation will be guided by Seneca's responsibility to provide employees with a safe workplace.

Should the issue persist, the supervisor may also consult with Human Resources and Campus Services to further assess the potential exposure(s). Seneca will address the matter in accordance with applicable policies and legislation.

Students

Students who feel adversely affected by scents on campus and who may be experiencing chemical or environmental sensitivities should report their concern to their program chair (or co-ordinator) first to determine if the issue can be addressed and resolved internally. This may involve a discussion with a class led by a professor or the program chair requesting co-operation from the student/s to accommodate the affected individual.

If the issue cannot be resolved internally, the student should contact [Counselling Services](#), whose response will be guided by applicable policies and procedures. The student should also be actively involved in identifying solutions.

References

- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct](#)
- [Smoking Restrictions Policy](#)

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