

## **New 2012 SEEDS School/ Board Chaperone Policy – Information Sheet**

For the 2012 Enrichment Studies program year, we have introduced a NEW school/ school-board chaperone policy after considerable thought, research, discussion and input. The ultimate goals of this new policy are a better quality experience for the student participants, while making the program more operationally effective. The new policy was posted on our website at the beginning of September, and reference to the new policy was made in a broadcast email to all school and board contacts in our database in September. The new policy has raised some concerns, which we'd like to set at ease, and thus we produced this information sheet.

**Section 1: The policy, as posted on our website (<http://esu.queensu.ca/about/chaperone.php>)**

### **Preamble**

Given the evolving nature of the roles of school and school board supervisors and the development of the Enrichment Studies Unit programs, along with feedback from student participants, this document describes the new policies and protocols for school and school board chaperones within the *ESU at Queen's University* environment.

### **Rationale and Background**

1. Our review of many Ontario school board policies on chaperones indicates that in almost all cases, having qualified external supervisors meets the board's criteria for proper chaperoning. In some cases, enrichment programs are excluded from the board's typical chaperone policy.
2. ESU Student Supervisors are subject to a recruitment and training process that begins six months prior to the program with thorough interviews, reference checks, screening, team-building and extensive training. Many of them have considerable experience in summer camps, mentoring, education or other related jobs and volunteer service. They are familiar with the recent experience of considering post-secondary education and the transition from secondary to post-secondary. They can relate these fears and joys to the students they supervise, and they can speak to their experience of life at Queen's or to particular aspects of their faculty or department.
3. The feedback from student surveys over the past two years has consistently indicated that supervision by ESU Student Supervisors results in a more complete and satisfactory university-like experience, more consistent supervisory treatment and even application of the ESU regulations, and a more positive experience in that it eliminates exclusion from a previously established group of school friends. Students also tell us that residing in the C-wing, or "core" of Victoria Hall Residence is not conducive to building a sense of community and group spirit that occurs on the linear floors of the other wings.
4. Not placing students in C-wing allows for better management of the residence building as it reduces potential conflicts in the C-wing due to the location of the elevators (i.e. hallway noise, cross-gender encounters).
5. By placing students throughout the residence building (excluding the C-wing) simply by room-mates and not restricted to maintaining one particular school or board on a floor or in a specific area, it gives greater flexibility in

filling spaces, provides a more university-like experience, and increases the possibility of ensuring one floor is all single gender, thus reducing possible conflicts.

6. Utilizing C-wing keeps our costs down; thereby letting us keep our program fees as low as possible for the quality of experience we offer.

## **Policies**

School and school board representatives may attend ESU programs as chaperones under the following conditions:

1. School/ board chaperones will not have the responsibility of directly supervising their students once they arrive at Queen's University. The Enrichment Studies Unit (ESU) will be hiring enough Student Supervisors (known as "red shirts") to ensure that every student will be supervised at a ratio of about 15 students for every one Student Supervisor, depending on registration numbers, room allocation, and other mitigating factors.
2. School/ board chaperones will be placed in the C-wing of Victoria Hall residence, which is the centre core of the building. These rooms are separate from the hallway wings.
3. Students will not be placed on a residence floor according to their school or board. We will continue to allocate students to their floors by gender, and we will still place requested room-mates together in rooms, but student pairings will be spread throughout the residence building.
4. Each school/ board chaperone is entitled to free room and board if they have 10 or more students from their school (or board) attending the program per chaperone. With fewer than 10 students, the following costs will apply (costs will be invoiced to the school or board):
  - a. If there are fewer than five (5) students from your school/board per chaperone, the chaperone will be charged the full cost of room and board (2011 amounts: \$186 for SEEDS and \$241 for EMC)
  - b. If there are between five (5) to nine (9) students from your school/board per chaperone, the chaperone will be charged 50% of cost of room and board
  - c. If there are ten (10) or more students from your school/board per chaperone, there will be no charge levied for room and board
5. School/ board chaperones must register in advance through our online registration system. If the chaperone has not registered, and received confirmation, the ESU will find a room for the chaperone upon arrival and will charge the school/ board an administration fee of \$50 on top of any room and board charges as per the section above.
6. Although the school/ board chaperone will not be directly supervising their students, he/she will be expected to act as a resource and support person for their students, and for the ESU Student Supervisors. Chaperones are welcome to meet with their students during designated times.
7. Chaperones are expected to work collaboratively and respectfully with ESU Student Supervisors, and to take direction from the ESU supervisory team as necessary. Chaperones will be expected to assist with extra-curricular activities and in any exceptional cases where their skills or expertise would be necessary.

## **Section 2: Clarification of supervision arrangement**

The new School/ Board Chaperone Policy has led to an impression that student supervision will be compromised, leaving schools and school boards at risk of jeopardizing the spirit of their approved excursion policies. In fact, we believe the new policy leads to the opposite effect: that it will improve the supervision and support of the students. Here's why:

### *Distribution of students*

The distribution of students throughout the residence sounds more troublesome than it actually is. The reality is that the students will still be relatively close together, and in fact, in many cases, the students will be on the same floor. Here's an example of how it works:

For 2012, in order to improve the quality of the program, we are capping the number of students attending any one week of the SEEDS program, ideally to no more than 450 students. This means that we will only be using the top four floors of Victoria Hall Residence (with possible overflow onto one more floor). Assuming we have a 50-50 split of males and females attending, two of the floors would be for male students and two for female students.

Victoria Hall is physically shaped like a giant "X" with each arm being a wing, and the centre being a core that is attached to all wings.

If your school has six female students attending, for example, they will all be one floor, but not necessarily (although likely) in one wing, and they will be interspersed with other female students on that floor/ wing. The female teacher-supervisor will be placed in the centre "core" (also called the C-wing). The similar will be true of the male students and their teacher-supervisor in the core of their floor. Note that students will still be paired up with their requested room-mate.

In schools with greater numbers, for example, 30 female students, those students will be spread across one floor, and possibly a second floor, depending on space. Each floor has about 130 beds, so in all likelihood, all 30 of these students would be on one floor, but interspersed with other students. With a greater number of students, the benefit to having the teacher-supervisor in a core bedroom is that the students can always find their teacher, and the teacher can go to any of the wings on that floor to be with their students if any issues were to come up.

### *More supervision per student means better care for all students*

Furthermore, this arrangement actually improves supervision simply by adding more supervisors. Each group of students is supervised by one of our highly trained student supervisors, many of whom have extensive first aid, summer camp, and peer tutoring experience, and many of whom are teacher-candidates or are considering teacher's college. If an issue were to arise involving one of your students, for example an injury or a serious bout of home-sickness, you as the teacher can respond to that particular student, knowing that the remainder of your students are under the care of qualified "red-shirt." We consider this a win-win for both the student in crisis and the remaining students.

Furthermore, we are building times into our program schedule dedicated for teacher-supervisors to meet with their students together. We intend to have a school-group gathering time after classes, during free time before dinner. We can also work together with you to identify appropriate times for your group to gather in the

morning, and at the end of the day. In fact, we have shortened the activity period in the evening by half an hour, as students were telling us they were tired and wanted some evening down time. This could make an ideal time to meet up before bedtime.

Additionally, as always, teachers are welcome and encouraged to attend any and all of the courses offered during the day. A complete list of the teacher's students is provided, along with a map of our extensive campus, and teachers may passively attend any course to see what their students are doing. This is another way of meeting the criteria of "supervising" your students during the day. We feel that this should be encouraged by the school administration, so teachers can truly see the students in their courses.

Our goal is to provide a more true university experience by grouping students from different backgrounds together. This variety also helps us in other ways, by allowing us to more cost-effectively make use of the residence rooms we have available (and financial concerns are a real issue for us as a cost-recovery unit), and we have found that by "breaking up" existing school groups, there is a better response in terms of behaviour. Not to mention a more enriching experience by meeting new people.

### *Reducing student anxiety*

We have been questioned about additional anxiety that some young students may have about leaving home for the first time. We agree that this is sensitive, and our student supervisors are trained to respond appropriately. They are familiar with the experience of anxiety – many of them attended SEEDS or EMC as a young person! – not to mention their experience in first year university in a new residence, far from home. Our supervisors are *trained* in how to engage students, and relate to them on a personal level, and can relieve fears simply by their knowledge – they know fire escapes, codes of conduct, and building security, typically to a greater degree than teacher-supervisors.

Compare the anxiety of a student in this role versus a student attending from a school who is placed under the supervision of a teacher from a different school in the same board who is overseeing their own group of nine students plus this one more. This student has to be anxious about their relationship with these new peers, who may or may not be welcoming or judgmental, as well as getting to know a teacher who has pre-existing relationships with the other students. Rather, in a group of mixed students with a "neutral" student supervisor, this student is treated equally and all the students have a chance to integrate under the encouraging watch of the redshirt.

We also compare this experience to that of a summer camp: Although we recognize this is a school trip approved by the board, the type of supervision we are proposing is not unlike that of an overnight summer camp, for example. In such cases, students of this age, and younger, are being accommodated in cabins with new and unfamiliar students, with new supervisors, and undoubtedly in an environment of higher risk. Our supervisors are well-trained, many with significant camp type experiences, and many with first aid certifications at or above their summer camp counterparts

In sum, your students will have additional supervision, still be close by, and will benefit from the enriching experience of "living with a university student," meeting new people and making new friends.