



SCENT-SENSITIVE WORKPLACE POLICY

Version 1.0 – Approved by the APUO Executive Committee – 03/14/2017

Background

The Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa (the “APUO”) affirms its commitment to providing a safe & inclusive environment for all employees, and to accommodating persons with disabilities in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code. Some APUO staff report sensitivities to various chemical-based or scented products. In response to such health concerns, the APUO has developed these guidelines. The APUO asks for everyone's cooperation in its efforts to accommodate these health concerns in accordance with the provisions of Ontario Human Rights Code.

Policy: A scent-sensitive work place

Due to the health concerns arising from exposure to scented products – see below for examples - staff and visitors are asked to be considerate in their use of such products when reporting to this office, and to be aware that they may be asked to refrain from using such products should this be required.

Can scents cause health problems?

Allergic and asthmatic patients report that certain odours, even in the smallest amounts, can trigger an attack. In addition, those persons with "multiple chemical sensitivity" may also be affected. The severity of symptoms can vary. Some people report mild irritation while others may be very severely affected and/or must give up “normal” activities in order to avoid exposure to certain odours.

When scented products have been blamed for adversely affecting a person's health, some or all of the following symptoms may be reported:

headaches	loss of appetite	depression
dizziness	upper respiratory symptoms	anxiety
light-headedness	shortness of breath	nausea
weakness	difficulty with concentration	fatigue
malaise	skin irritation	Numbness
confusion	insomnia	

What types of products contain scents?

Scents are included in a very large range of products including:

shampoo & conditioners	potpourri	fragrances & perfumes
lotions & creams	soaps	colognes & aftershaves
deodorants	oils	air fresheners & deodorizers
hair sprays	candles	industrial & household chemicals
cosmetics	cleaning products	

Scent-Sensitive Workplace Policy

It is important to remember some products which claim to be “scent free” may have only masked the scent by use of an additional chemical.

Raising awareness of scent sensitivities

- Staff will be informed of this policy through email, meetings, signs posted in buildings and materials posted on APUO website.
- Visitors will be informed of this policy through signs. Meeting hosts are asked to explain the policy further if needed.
- This policy can be reviewed and changed because of experience or new knowledge.

What should I do if I have a multiple chemical sensitivities?

- If you are suffering from the effects of odours in the workplace, try, if possible, to identify the source of the problem.
- Discuss your sensitivity with your manager, so that he/she is aware of the issues.

If the issue is a general office or building issue

- Discuss this with the Administrative Director (the “director”). The director should then followed up with the landlord or otherwise as appropriate.
- Wherever possible, the APUO will give one week’s advance notice of activities as carpet cleaning, spring-cleaning, painting etc. When you receive such notices, discuss with the director how/if this may affect you and, if needed, make arrangements to be accommodated during this activity.
- While you need not alert the director every time there is a notice of general office cleaning, it may be helpful to remind them of the previous accommodation so that arrangements can be made on a timely basis.

If the source is another employee

- If you feel comfortable approaching the individual then you should do so. Explain what the problem is and discuss how the conflict could be resolved, e.g. by asking them to wear a lighter scent, or less of it.
- If you do not feel comfortable approaching the individual, or if they do not respond well to your request, discuss the situation with the director to identify how the conflict could be resolved.
- The director should approach the individual to discuss how the issue could be resolved. On reaching a resolution, the director should document and inform all parties of what has been agreed.
- If the individual does not adjust their behaviour they will be in violation of this policy and the director should handle this through the standard disciplinary procedures.

What should I do if I am approached by someone with a multiple chemical sensitivity?

- Employees should consider all accommodation requests with dignity & respect, and in good faith.
- Discuss the issues with the individual to identify how the issue may be resolved.
- If you are unable to accommodate the request and/or you feel uncomfortable discussing this with the individual, explain this and then speak to your director.

The responsibilities of the director

- The director is required to follow up concerns and take any necessary action in a timely manner.