GUIDELINES ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS

1. **Preamble**
   
The University of Victoria is committed to ensuring a learning environment in which students have the right to equitable conditions and treatment. In particular, it is important to ensure fair methods of evaluation and to eliminate any perceptions of bias arising out of personal relationships between teachers and students. At the same time, there should be no unfair restrictions on the educational and employment opportunities of all students nor on the reasonable freedom of association and interaction which is part of a healthy learning environment. The following guidelines are intended to balance these objectives.

2. **To Whom Do These Guidelines Apply?**
   
   2.1 While all members of the University community should avoid conflicts of interest, these guidelines are drafted specifically for students and teachers.

   2.2 Students include anyone enrolled, or applying to be enrolled, in a course or program offered by the University for credit towards a degree or diploma.

   2.3 Teachers include anyone responsible for teaching, evaluation or academic supervision.

3. **What is a Conflict of Interest?**
   
   3.1 It is neither possible nor desirable to specify all those situations in which there may be a conflict of interest. However, members of the University community are entitled to guidance in this respect.

   3.2 A conflict of interest may arise in situations in which there is a reasonable apprehension that a particular relationship between a teacher and a student may confer upon one of them an unfair advantage or subject one of them to an unfair disadvantage. Such relationships include, but are not limited to:
3.2.1 close family relationships such as those between spouses or spousal equivalents, parents and children, siblings, in-laws, grandparents and grandchildren;
3.2.2 amorous relationships;
3.2.3 relationships between persons whose economic interests are closely interrelated.

3.3 A conflict of interest may arise in any situation where one person in such a relationship is in a position to make decisions or take actions that affect the other person. Such situations include, but are not limited to:

3.3.1 the decision to admit a student to a program;
3.3.2 the provision of instruction;
3.3.3 the evaluation of a student;
3.3.4 the awarding of prizes, scholarships, financial assistance and other benefits;
3.3.5 the award of teaching or research assistantships or other remunerative employment, either within the University or using funds administered by the University.

3.4 Even in the absence of a conflict of interest as defined in these guidelines, teachers and students should be aware that relationships between teachers and students involve trust and disparities in power, and may give rise to perceptions of bias, unfair advantage, or unfair treatment.

4. How are Conflicts to be Dealt With?

4.1 It is the responsibility of chairs, directors and deans to ensure compliance with this policy.

4.2 It is incumbent upon teachers to avoid situations in which a conflict of interest may arise and to deal promptly with any conflict of interest that does arise.

4.3 Where a conflict of interest, as defined above, arises, the teacher must notify the relevant chair, director or dean.

4.4 Other persons who apprehend a conflict of interest may also bring the matter to the attention of the appropriate chair, director or dean.

4.5 Where a conflict of interest may arise, one or more of the following methods should be used to avoid or resolve such conflict.

4.5.1 The teacher should normally decline or terminate a supervisory, teaching, evaluative or decision-making role in which a conflict of interest arises, unless the chair, director or dean is of the view that this will create undue hardship to the student.
4.5.2 In situations where the conflicts of interest involves teaching, supervision or evaluation and where alternative courses or supervision exist that are reasonable and appropriate to the student's program, the student should utilize those alternatives.

4.5.3 Where no reasonable and appropriate alternative exists, the chair, director or dean shall ensure that a fair and unbiased mechanism of evaluation is put in place. This will normally require that another suitably qualified evaluator review all material submitted for evaluation, review the grades assigned, and report whether those grades are reasonable.

4.5.4 Where third parties are concerned about a perceived conflict of interest, the teacher, chair, director or dean should consider informing them that the conflict has been dealt with pursuant to these guidelines. Such a step is for the protection of the student, teacher and the University.

4.6 Any person concerned about a conflict of interest may also initiate an inquiry through the office of the Director, Equity Issues and Assistant to the President. Following such an inquiry, the Director, Equity Issues:

4.6.1 may bring the matter to the attention of the appropriate chair, director or dean;

4.6.2 may make recommendations for the resolution of the matter;

4.6.3 shall be notified of the outcome.

4.7 A failure to comply with these guidelines constitutes unprofessional conduct.

5. How Will These Guidelines be Implemented and Monitored?

5.1 In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the guidelines and assess the need for revision, chairs, directors and deans will, for a period of two years, file annual reports with the Director, Equity Issues and Assistant to the President. These reports will, while preserving any necessary confidentiality, state the number and nature of conflict cases dealt with over the year, the solutions adopted, continuing difficulties, and suggested revisions to the guidelines and/or procedures.

5.2 Following the review of the reports, the Director, Equity Issues and Assistant to the President will report to Senate and state whether or not a review committee should be struck.