
Scent Awareness Policy

Board of Governors Manual

Approving Authority: Board of Governors

Established: April 4, 2013

Date of Last Review/Revision: December 8, 2022 (Replaces April 4, 2013)

1. Policy Statement

St. Jerome's University is committed to a safe and healthy environment for faculty, staff, students, and visitors. This policy is intended to increase the awareness within the University community about the potential impact of fragrance chemicals on the health, wellbeing, productivity and lifestyle of those affected; ask for voluntary cooperation towards a scent-free environment; and, provide the steps for responding to scent-related issues.

2. Scope

This policy is applicable to all members of the University community, including but not limited to, students, employees, Board of Governors, guests, visitors, volunteers, contractors, invited officials, and designates representing the University.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. **Fragrance:** Something produced by natural ingredients or chemical additives to give a sweet or pleasant odour.
- 3.2. **Fragrance or Scent sensitivity:** Many individuals are known to become hypersensitive to common chemical and environmental stimuli. A range of responses may occur following exposure to scents. The odour may simply be identified as unpleasant but not provoke an adverse health effect. The substance may provoke an irritant response (tearing, nasal congestion). Or, individuals who have asthma or other respiratory health conditions may experience a sensitivity reaction (an immune response), which may cause significant adverse effects.
- 3.3. **Odour:** the property of a substance that affects and can be detected by the sense of smell
- 3.4. **Triggers:** Common triggers or products that induce symptoms in people with scent sensitivities. Some examples of products that are known to cause sensitivity reactions in people include colognes/perfumes, body sprays, lotions, hairspray, after-shave and aromatic oils (aromatherapy). Exposure to these or similar products are known to cause a range of symptoms (some very serious) that include fatigue, rashes, dizziness, migraine headaches and difficulty breathing.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Reasonable care and diligence shall be exercised to prevent contravention of this Policy.

The University has identified roles and responsibilities as follows:

- 4.1. The Vice President Academic and Dean, and the Executive Director, Finance and Administration are responsible for ensuring that the party or parties responsible for the day-to-day implementation and enforcement of this Policy fulfill those responsibilities accordingly; and for monitoring this Policy and for working toward compliance.
- 4.2. Supervisors will ensure their employees are notified of the Policy and provide the resources and support necessary to be in compliance with this Policy.
- 4.3. All departments that engage in drafting and executing contracts are responsible for ensuring that their contracts for third-party work (contractors) on University property clearly state that the University is a scent-free environment. The Office of the Executive Director, Finance and Administration can assist with drafting and negotiating the proper contract language.
- 4.4. Community members are responsible to be in compliance with this Policy and are encouraged to communicate this Policy to other community members including but not limited to guests, visitors, event attendees. The success of this policy is dependent upon the courtesy, respect, and cooperation of community members, not only to comply but to continue to encourage the compliance of others.
- 4.5. Scent-free signage will be posted and maintained throughout the University's property. The type and location of signs shall comply with the goals of the Policy. Requests for additional signage will be considered and addressed as appropriate.
- 4.6. Student Affairs will ensure promotion efforts are undertaken with respect to students participating in SJU programs and services, and those living in the Residences.
- 4.7. Human Resources will ensure health promotion efforts are undertaken with respect to information and possible accommodation.

Appendix A

Supplementary Information and Procedures

The University commits to:

- Promote the reduction of unnecessary use of chemicals, including fragrance chemicals
- Promote the use of environmentally-friendly and least harmful products in laboratories, cleaning materials, and building materials
- Target harmful chemicals and contaminants and implement controls to effectively prevent or minimize their release into the general air as a result of building, maintenance, custodial, research and teaching activities
- Support the best possible air quality practicably attainable by means of proper ventilation, peak performance and proper maintenance of building mechanical ventilation systems
- Develop proper information and training to promote the above to the University community

As a supervisor, if an individual in your work area or classroom is adversely affected by scented products:

- Listen to the person with respect and civility.
- Clarify the issue. Ask the individual to describe their health effects, the factors that make the problem better or worse, and the actions they are taking to deal with it.
- Investigate the issue and use good judgment and consideration to provide a fair, uniform and timely resolution.
- Discuss the issue with your staff or students in an open and non-threatening manner. Inform them of the health concerns that have arisen as a result of the use of scented products in the workplace. You may choose to have this discussion with an individual or an entire group, whichever is appropriate to the situation.
- Request everyone's cooperation and understanding to voluntarily avoid the use of scented products in the area. Discuss the benefits of a scent-free work area.
- Implement measures to reasonably accommodate those who are affected by scented products.
- Refer issues which cannot be resolved locally to the Director of Facilities, Human Resources, or the Joint Health and Safety Committee.

As employees:

- Be considerate of those who are sensitive to fragrance chemicals. Avoid using scented products; instead, use scent-free alternatives.
- If you do use scented products, use them sparingly. A general guideline for scented products is that the scent should not be detectable more than an arm's length away from you. Do not apply scented products in a public area.
- Avoid using products (e.g. air fresheners or potpourris) that give off chemical-based scents in your work area.
- Avoid using laundry products or cleaning agents that are scented. Air out dry-cleaned clothing before wearing.

Those who are scent-sensitive:

If you feel you can do so comfortably, approach the scented individual and let them know how you react to fragrances. Be specific about the types of physical reactions you have (e.g. asthma attacks, migraines, shortness of breath). Talk to the individual in a cordial and respectful manner. Ask for their understanding and cooperation. Many people are unaware of the potential health effects of fragrance chemicals.

Inform your supervisor or instructor of your sensitivities, your symptoms, and the types of exposures that improve or worsen these symptoms. Ask them to assist in finding a solution to your situation. As an employee, you may ask your supervisor to discuss this matter with the individual involved or with the group of employees. As a student, you can ask your professor to discuss the issue with the class and ask for their cooperation in not using scented products.

Consult with your physician about your symptoms.

Responding to an issue about the scented product you are wearing:

If an individual or your supervisor informs you that the fragranced products you use or wear are a problem and requests that you avoid using them, you may feel puzzled, hurt, annoyed, defensive or even insulted by the request. Understand that it is not about you as a person or about your choice of fragrance, but it is about the chemicals in the fragranced product. Do not discount the issue as ridiculous and unreasonable.

Discuss the issue openly. Ask questions about the health impact on the person, the types of symptoms experienced, the factors which make the person's symptoms better or worse (e.g. fragrance type, amount used).

Empathize with the individual. Work with cooperation and understanding towards a satisfactory resolution.

Resources

[Canadian Association for Occupational Health and Safety](#)

[The Lung Association Ontario](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Commission](#)