

STATEMENT FROM THE PRESIDENT OF DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY AND DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF DENTISTRY

January 5, 2015, 9:30am

Dalhousie Suspends 13 fourth year dental students from clinical activities.

On December 17, 2014, Dalhousie University communicated that a number of women had come forward with a complaint under the university's Sexual Harassment Policy. These students chose to proceed with a restorative justice process. That process is ongoing. At that time, we also stated a commitment to address the broader harm caused by this incident, as well as address safety concerns among students, faculty and the public.

One of the primary ways that the Faculty of Dentistry ensures public safety is through professional standards. No student can receive a DDS degree from Dalhousie without meeting academic requirements, which includes professional standards.

Today, as part of our ongoing response to the recent Facebook incident, we are announcing the suspension of 13 fourth year dental students from clinical activities pending consideration by the Faculty of Dentistry's Academic Standards Class Committee.

The suspension is necessary to ensure a safe and supportive environment for patients and classmates who participate in the clinics. Additionally, it will allow the Faculty of Dentistry Academic Standards Class Committee to consider the matter from the perspective of professionalism requirements. This Faculty-led review will commence this week. The restorative justice process, along with other options being considered, are intended to repair the harm caused by this offensive behaviour.

The decision to suspend the clinical privileges of the students was made on December 22, 2014, and communicated today, January 5, 2015, to ensure the appropriate supports were available for students. Fourth-year classes in the Faculty of Dentistry are scheduled to resume on January 12, 2015. A decision about fourth-year classes and the rescheduling of fourth-year exams will be made this week.

The Faculty of Dentistry's Academic Class Standards Committee has broad authority over academic performance, including professionalism. Its powers include the authority to create remediation plans where warranted, and to recommend academic dismissal. The committee will assess the situation of each individual and ensure that any individual recommended for graduation will have complied with the professionalism requirements of the academic program. No student will be permitted to graduate unless they have done so.

Dalhousie's Faculty of Dentistry has been a proud member of the community for over 100 years. Comments expressed on the Facebook postings were deeply offensive, and completely unacceptable to all of us at Dalhousie University. They do not represent our students or the hundreds of graduates who serve communities throughout our region and our country.

As previously stated, Dalhousie University, and the Faculty of Dentistry, are committed to significant consequences to fully address this situation. However, those consequences must be based on a just process - one that complies with the law, is consistent with university policies, and supports the rights of everyone involved.

We recognize that what has happened is not isolated to Dalhousie University. It is a complex societal issue about which our community cares deeply and in which we must fully engage. We take seriously our responsibility to create the space for this conversation in order to ensure a healthy, safe environment for all and we are developing strategies to address these issues. While this will be a long, complex journey, it is a necessary one for us to lead.

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