



StFXU Senate Policy on Hazing and Initiation

StFX University affirms that hazing and inappropriate initiation activities are prohibited on or off campus. The University is committed to building community through positive, inclusive welcoming activities where any initiation, hazing, unauthorized or degrading activities are not permitted.

StFX University is committed to supporting an environment conducive to personal growth where students maintain the highest standards of respect for self and others. Sustaining an environment of mutual respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others will ensure our students live up to the highest values of our community.

Our goals are to ensure that students feel safe, welcome and respected in their new environment. The purpose of any Student Orientation event/activity is to help build strong communities through positive and inclusive activities. Any initiation or hazing, inappropriate, unauthorized or degrading activities are not permitted.

Definition of welcoming activities

Any endeavor in which a student participates that is intended to enhance her/his sense of well-being and to promote or enhance physical, cognitive, and emotional health.

Definitions of non-welcoming activities, hazing

According to the Community Code, "Hazing" means any action taken or situation created for the purpose of initiation or affiliation with any University organization or team, with or without the consent of the individual, which jeopardizes the physical or mental well-being of the individual.

"Any activity expected of someone joining a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses or endangers, regardless of the person's willingness to participate."

(Alfred University 1999)

"A broad term encompassing any action or activity which does not contribute to the positive development of a person; which inflicts or intends to cause physical or mental harm or anxieties; which may demean, degrade, or disgrace any person, regardless of location, intent or consent of participants, or any action or situation, which intentionally or unintentionally endangers a student for admission into or affiliation with any student organization."

(MASH - Mothers Against School Hazing)

"Hazing is a process based on a tradition that is used by groups to maintain a hierarchy (a "pecking order") within the group. Regardless of consent, the rituals require individuals to engage in activities that are physically and psychologically stressful. These activities can be exhausting, humiliating, degrading, demeaning, and intimidating. They result in significant physical and emotional discomfort. More specifically, hazing

- Involves a repetition of a tradition
- Is a process
- Maintains a hierarchy within a group
- Intends to create closeness in a group
- Involves psychological and physical stress”

(Susan Lipkins 'Preventing Hazing' 2006)

Effects from the kind of activities that are considered non-welcoming

- Produces mental or physical discomfort for a person or group.
- Produces embarrassment, harassment or ridicule of a person or group.
- Puts an individual or group in danger of injury.
- Creates an unwelcoming environment.

How do I know if the activity is welcoming or not welcoming?

Make the following inquiries of each activity to determine whether or not it is welcoming

1. Does this activity promote and conform to the ideals and values of the house/team or institution?
2. Will this activity increase feelings of friendship between new and returning members of the house/team?
3. Is this activity an educational experience or opportunity?
4. Is alcohol involved?
5. Will current students refuse to participate with the new members and do exactly what they're being asked to do?
6. Does the activity risk emotional or physical abuse?
7. Is there risk of injury or a question of safety?
8. Do you have any reservation describing the activity to your parents, to a professor or University official?
9. Would you object to the activity being photographed for the school newspaper or filmed by the local TV news crew?

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes”, the activity is probably not welcoming.

(adapted from *Death By Hazing Sigma Alpha Epsilon. 1988.*)

Specific Activities

If you ask or require others, as a part of membership, to belong to your house/team to participate in any of the items below, you are in engaging in non-welcoming activity.

- Recklessly or intentionally endangering the physical health, mental health, safety, or dignity of a person.
- Willful destruction or removal of public or private property for the purpose of initiation or admission into affiliation with, or as a condition of continued membership in any organization.
- Forcing or requiring the drinking of alcohol or any other substance.
- Calisthenics such as push-ups, sit-ups, jogging, and runs.
- Paddling or striking in any manner.

- Marking, branding, or shaving the head or body hair.
- Preventing / restricting normal personal hygiene.
- Causing indecent exposure or nudity at any time.
- Physical harassment such as pushing, cursing, shouting, etc.
- Requiring uncomfortable, ridiculous, or embarrassing dress.
- Requiring the carrying of any items or requiring personal service or acts of servitude.
- Treating a person in a degrading or demeaning manner.
- Requiring New Members to practice periods of silence.
- Conducting “interrogations” or any other types of questioning.
- Forcing an individual to participate in any activity or become involved in any situation that is in violation of federal, provincial, or local laws; contrary to the person’s genuine moral or religious beliefs; or contrary to the rules and regulations of the educational institution or the national fraternity.
- Public stunts of buffoonery and / or tests of courage, bravery and stamina.
- Any activity that requires an unreasonable or inordinate amount of the individual’s time or in any manner impairs the individual’s academic efforts.
- Any activity that makes the individual an object of amusement or ridicule.
- Students expected to do anything that returning students will not do with them.
- Forced road trips off campus, kidnaps of pledged or initiated members.
- Requiring pledged or initiated members to wear unusual, conspicuous, embarrassing, or uncomfortable clothing, or clothing that is not normally considered to be in good taste.
- Uncomfortable or inconvenient sleeping arrangements, including sleeping outdoors or sleep deprivation.
- Humiliation in front of non-members.
- Verbal abuse and / or yelling and screaming at students.
- Black books, name lists, paddle, etc., on which signatures must be obtained. If these are solely for the purpose of getting to know each other and for no other purpose, and as long as the time and the place set for getting signatures are reasonable, this activity is not objectionable.
- Blindfolding members
- Use of ice, water, fire, or food in a manner not consistent with their proper use.
- Conducting war games or any other similar games.
- Forcing or requiring students to ingest any liquid or solid matter, edible or non-edible (e.g. any alcoholic substance, chewing tobacco, goldfish, raw onions, spoiled food, etc.) Dropping food (eggs, grapes, liver, etc.) or any other item into the mouth of students.
- Physical or mental shocks, regardless of degree or nature.

These do not compose an exhaustive list of actions that constitute unapproved orientation activities. Though some of these may not be as violent as paddling or beating, any form of unapproved orientation or initiation can swiftly lead to far more dangerous incidents.

Myths around Unapproved Orientation or Initiation Activities

Myth #1: Unapproved initiation activities are a problem only for universities primarily.

Fact: *Initiation is a societal problem. Unapproved initiation incidents have been frequently documented in the military, athletic teams, marching bands, religious cults, professional schools and other types of clubs and / or, organizations.*

Myth #2: Unapproved orientation activity is no more than foolish pranks that sometimes go awry.

Fact: ***Unapproved Initiation is an act of power and control over others --- it is victimization. Unapproved initiation is pre-meditated and NOT accidental. It can be abusive, degrading and often life-threatening.***

Myth #3: As long as there's no malicious intent, a little unapproved initiation should be O.K.

Fact: *Even if there's no malicious "intent" safety may still be a factor in traditional "initiation" activities that are considered to be "all in good fun."*

For example, serious accidents have occurred during scavenger hunts and kidnapping trips. Besides, what purpose do such activities serve in promoting the growth and development of housemates?

Myth #4: Unapproved initiation is an effective way to teach respect and develop discipline.

Fact: *First of all, respect must be EARNED – not taught. Victims of this activity rarely report having respect for those who have "initiated" them. Just like others forms of victimization, unapproved initiation breeds mistrust, apathy and alienation.*

Myth #5: But if I am not inappropriately initiating anyone, it's not my responsibility to stop it from happening.

Fact: *It is your responsibility. If you observe unapproved initiation and stand by silently, your silence condones these activities and makes you just as liable as those directly involved. If you witness an unapproved orientation incident or if you are "initiated", you should report the incident to the proper authorities.*

Any activity which an individual may construe as unapproved orientation or initiation should be reported by students, faculty, administrators, staff, community members, or visitors.

It is everyone's responsibility to report and prevent unapproved initiation or orientation activities.

Related policies:

Community Code:

http://sites.stfx.ca/student_life/student_conduct/

Discrimination and Harassment Policy

<http://www.mystfx.ca/campus/stu-serv/equity/StFX%20Discrimination%20and%20Harassment%20Policy.pdf>

Residence Standards:

http://www.mystfx.ca/services/residence/pdfs/Res_Life_Standards_2010.pdf

Risk Management Process:

<http://www.theu.ca/eventplanning>

University Policy on Drugs:

http://sites.stfx.ca/student_life/sites/sites.stfx.ca.student_life/files/Policy%20on%20Drugs.pdf

University Alcohol Policy

http://sites.stfx.ca/student_life/sites/sites.stfx.ca.student_life/files/Alcohol%20Policy%20March%202011.pdf