

Board Governance Policy Manual

Board and Committee Use of Electronic Communication Policy

Purpose

Board and committee members must conduct themselves at all times in a manner that supports the mandate and statutory obligations of the College, and serves the overall best interests of the College. Improper use of electronic communication has the potential to negatively impact the integrity of critical decisions made by governors and committees.

The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of BC (OIPC) has issued reports regarding the use of email communication, and specifically the duty to document decisions made by public bodies. An access inquirer under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA)* has the reasonable expectation that there will be records available to support important decisions.

Electronic communications are a common method used to conduct business between meetings, but careful consideration needs to be paid to when such method could attract criticism or be deemed contrary to the mandate and statutory obligations of the College. This includes the use of email or any instant messaging, such as iMessages, or text messaging.

The use of email by decision-makers to discuss a matter outside, and making and keeping a record of electronic communications must be subject to best practices. These include:

1. Ensuring that all parties to the decision-making process have been copied on the electronic communication. It is critical to the integrity of the decision-making process that all board or committee members review the same material and participate openly in discussion of a matter prior to a decision being made.
2. Ensuring a member of the senior management team (for Board matters), or program staff (for committee matters) must be included in the discussion so it may be properly documented in the relevant file.

Confidentiality of electronic communication is addressed in the Board's Confidentiality Policy, and is critically necessary. Electronic communication is discouraged due to the ease with which it may be improperly directed. No confidential information should be mentioned in an insecure form of electronic communication, such as to a personal email address or through using a personal smartphone or tablet.

Electronic communication that engages and informs all decision-makers, and is copied to designated College staff to create a full and proper record, is a useful tool especially between meetings. These must be subject to strict confidentiality requirements; however, care must be taken to ensure these communications are always professional in tone and content, as all College records may be subject to access requests under *FOIPPA*.

Under no circumstances are College governors (i.e. board and committee members) to use electronic communications during meetings to discuss a matter offline. All discussion must be openly and respectfully expressed and minuted accordingly, in order to ensure the integrity of the decision-making process.

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Application

This policy applies to board members, committee members, and any other individual representing or doing work for the College.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the College's Board and Committee Use of Electronic Communication Policy and agree to conduct myself in accordance with it.

Signature _____

Name _____

Date _____