

## Social, dating and sexual relationships

If someone is friendly and invites you to go somewhere or do something with them, they may be interested in getting to know you better. However, it doesn't necessarily mean that they want an intimate personal or sexual relationship with you. If the person continues to show interest in you, however, it may mean that they would like to establish a dating relationship. Communicating clearly with the other person will help you to determine whether they are interested in a more personal relationship.

In Canada, men and women are free to make choices about whom they date and if or when they want to have sex with another person. People are also free to have an intimate sexual relationship with a person of the same gender.

Entering into a dating relationship with another person does not mean that you have to have sex with that person. Forcing, or pressuring another person to have sexual intercourse or to engage in any unwanted sexual contact (kissing, fondling, etc.), is sexual assault and is a criminal offence in Canada. Even if you have been dating someone for some time, that does not give that person the right to have sex with you.

**Office of Human Rights, Equity and  
Harassment Prevention**  
494-1137  
hrehp.dal.ca

## If you are feeling uncomfortable...

If you are feeling uncomfortable with the way someone else is behaving, it is best to be open and direct with that person. For example, if someone tries to touch you in a way that you don't like, it is okay to tell them to stop. It is acceptable to say "no" to someone if you don't want to accept an invitation to do something, or if you don't like the way someone is behaving. It is also important to respect someone else who asks you to stop something you are doing because it is making them uncomfortable.

If you are feeling upset or unsure about something that is happening, or has happened, and you don't feel able to talk to the person who has made you uncomfortable, it may help to talk to someone else. Don't keep it to yourself! Unwanted behaviour from another person is not your fault and it is not something that you need to hide or be ashamed about. You may wish to contact one of the resources listed below to seek information and advice.

## Contact Information

<b>International Student Advisor</b>	<b>494-1735</b>
<b>Counselling and Psychological Services</b>	<b>494-2081</b>
<b>Harassment Prevention Advisor</b>	<b>494-1137</b>
<b>University Health Services</b>	<b>494-2171</b>
<b>Dalhousie Security</b>	<b>494-6400</b>
<b>Multifaith Centre</b>	<b>494-2287</b>

Prepared by the Office of Human Rights,  
Equity and Harassment

# SOCIAL CULTURE & RELATIONSHIPS IN CANADA

## *A Guide for International Students*

 **DALHOUSIE  
UNIVERSITY**  
*Inspiring Minds*  
hrehp.dal.ca

## Learning about life in Canada

Settling into a new environment can be exciting but also full of challenges. Understanding how people in a different culture approach work, study and daily life is sometimes difficult. Two skills that you can use to learn about your new surroundings are to observe those around you and to ask lots of questions. Most people will try to be helpful in situations where you are feeling confused or unsure of how to act or interpret a situation.

Interacting with other people in social or dating situations can be especially confusing for some new visitors. How people get to know each other, when and how a closer relationship develops, how people act towards each other within a dating or romantic relationship, can be quite different in Canada from what you may be used to in your own culture.

In general, relationships between men and women may be more or less formal than in your country. Women and men should be treated with equal respect. Again, observing people around you will be helpful in understanding what is acceptable in different situations.

## Human Rights in Canada:

### What you need to know about interacting with others

Canada has human rights legislation which is intended to recognize and protect the rights and dignity of all people and to ensure equality among all people. In Canada, men, women and children have rights and freedoms and are to be treated equally and with respect regardless of age; race; colour; religion; creed; sex; sexual orientation; physical disability or mental disability; irrational fear of contracting an illness or disease; ethnic, national or aboriginal origin; family status; marital status; source of income; and political belief, affiliation or activity.

Dalhousie University operates in accordance with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act and is committed to providing a working and learning environment that is free from discrimination and harassment.

Human rights legislation in Canada also prohibits sexual harassment, which is unwanted attention of a sexual or sex-based nature from another person.

Dalhousie has a Human Rights, Equity and Harassment Prevention Office in Room 2 of the Henry Hicks Building where you can find more information, or by calling 494-1137.

For more information check  
[hrehp.dal.ca](http://hrehp.dal.ca)

## Relationships between men and women in Canada

Your experience in Canada will be more rewarding if you are able to meet and enjoy the friendship and company of other people. Finding friends will allow you to learn more about your new environment and perhaps to try new things and see new places while you are here. It will also give you opportunities to relax away from your academic activities.

In Canada, the relationships between men and women, and how they interact with each other, may be different than you are used to. It is common for men and women to be friends and to do things together without having a dating or sexual relationship. For example, male and female friends can study together, go out to a restaurant or movie, or go to the gym to exercise. It is acceptable for a woman to invite a man to go out and also to pay for any expenses involved in the activity (or each person may pay their own costs). Chaperones are not required to participate in activities with a person of a different gender.

While there may be more informality in Canada in areas of dress, friendship and dating, each individual makes their own decisions about what they are comfortable with.