



Scenarios for Understanding the Professional Boundaries Guideline

Scenario 1: Social media

- Lucy Black is 37 and new to teaching, after studying to change careers from computing.
- At the start of this year she left the city to teach Economics at a State High School.
- Tristan, who is one of Ms Black's students, contacts her through Facebook. He sends through a friend request with a message asking questions related to a current assignment.
- Ms Black replies stating that she cannot be friends with students on Facebook. However, she answers Tristan's questions.
- The following night Tristan sends through more questions, and Ms Black answers them. They are both online at the same time and use the "chat" facility so the messages are instant.
- Tristan tells "Miss B" that she is cool and compares her to other teachers, criticising some by name. Ms Black does not discourage him, and even says that Mr Riley, the deputy principal, is so out-of-touch and very uncool, that she avoids having to talk with him.
- Tristan then starts asking Ms Black about what she is up to on the weekend and they start chatting about their common personal interests.

Discussion questions

1. What issues and concerns are raised in this scenario?
2. What might be negative consequences for:
 - The student and the student's family
 - The teacher
 - The school and the teaching profession?
3. What responses or actions can the teacher take to influence a positive outcome?

Scenario 2: Socialising with students

- Charlie Matthews is 34. He is an experienced teacher and the Year 11 Coordinator. He teaches Senior Mathematics and Science at a Catholic High School in a small community in Central Queensland.
- Charlie and a couple of other teachers play mixed volleyball on Friday nights at the local sporting club. Several students and some older siblings also play.
- The local sporting club has organised an end-of-year Christmas party. Charlie attends with his teaching colleagues.
- Charlie spends most of the evening with a group of students and former students who play volleyball with him.
- At the end of the party Angela asks "Mr Matthews" if he wants to join her and a group of friends for a drink at the local hotel. Charlie's teaching colleagues are not around to invite along. He agrees to go anyway.
- Charlie taught Angela two years ago. He teaches her younger sister Dawn who has just completed Year 11.
- He buys a round of drinks for Angela and her friends. He sees Dawn with a drink. Charlie thinks she is underage. He is not sure whether he paid for her drink.

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Scenario 3: Counselling students

- Isabelle Green has been teaching for just over a year now. She teaches Drama and English at an Independent School for girls from Prep to Grade 12.
- Miss Green notices that Imogen, who is new to the school, spends a lot of time alone. She stops and chats to her. Imogen tells her that it is hard fitting in. Miss Green empathises with her and tells her she is still finding it hard to fit in too.
- Miss Green makes a habit of stopping to say hello whenever she passes Imogen in the school yard. After a short while, she starts seeking out Imogen, to check up on her.
- Imogen feels she can trust Miss Green. She tells her about the problems she is having at home with her mother since her parents' divorce. Miss Green's parents divorced when she was in high school too. She feels she is in a position to offer support and comfort.
- More and more often, Imogen is not bringing lunch to school. She likes to leave home before her mother gets up because they always seem to fight in the morning. On these days, Miss Green buys Imogen lunch.
- Miss Green gave Krystal a lecture in front of the class for not handing in an assignment on time, but did not say anything to Imogen, who also did not hand in her assignment.

Discussion questions

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Scenario 4: Physical contact

- Robert Woolly has been teaching at state primary schools for nearly three decades.
- Mr Woolly knows about "that case" where the court said schools are not sterile environments and that it is okay for teachers to pat a student on his or her shoulder for encouragement.
- He has always knelt down and hugged the younger students to comfort them when they were sad.
- He knows it is okay to touch a student for instruction, such as moving the student's fingers into the correct pencil grip, or positioning their arms when using sport equipment or playing a musical instrument.
- He feels confident and relaxed in his dealings with students.
- Marco is a shy child in Mr Woolly's year 4 class, who often becomes anxious in class.
- Mr Woolly is keen to draw Marco out of his shell and to make him feel relaxed. When he sees that Marco is getting anxious about a task, he stands behind him and gently rubs his shoulders until Marco says that he will give it a go.
- Marco often says he does not want to go to school. His parents discover that it is because Mr Woolly is giving shoulder rubs to Marco. They talk to the principal about it.
- The principal tells Mr Woolly that she has been approached by the parents of a child in his class who is uncomfortable with Mr Woolly touching him. The principal directs Mr Woolly to stop touching children.

Discussion questions

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* Note: The persons and facts depicted in these scenarios are not real