Smudging Procedure

Background
Smudging is a spiritual practice of some First Nations cultures, which involves the burning of sage, sweet grass, cedar or other sacred medicines. Today, many First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have incorporated smudging into their lives. The medicines are burned for the purification and to set the intention of the individuals and the physical space. Smudging can be done at any time for personal grounding and may occur for at meetings, gatherings, feasts, counselling sessions, lectures or events.

While smudging is an accepted practice on campus, there are a number of details which must be followed for fire safety and some buildings require modifications to the air handling and fire alarm systems.

Please note that smudging is never acceptable in residence rooms. Students living in residence may request a suitable location through Student Housing Services or visit the Aboriginal Resource Centre as a designated space.

Guidelines for Smudging on Campus
The act of clearing the air, mind, spirit and emotions may be accomplished in a variety of ways but according to practice, a smudge is led by a person who has an understanding of what a smudge is, why it is done and the guidelines for the University of Guelph. That person may be an Elder, Knowledge Holder or Community Helper; it can be a student, staff, faculty member or guest.

The medicine will be placed in a fire-proof smudge container. The container may be a shell, stone, copper, brass or cast-iron bowl or pan. The medicine is lit with a match or lighter. Once the medicine is lit, the flame is extinguished and the smoke may be pushed forward with a feather or a fan. Only a small stream of smoke is required therefore, it is important for facilitators to appropriately manage the amount of medicine used indoor spaces. Smudging should not create enough smoke to overpower the space.

Smudging is always voluntary. People should never be forced or pressured to smudge. It is completely acceptable for a person to indicate that they do not want to smudge and that person may choose to stay in the room and refrain or leave the room during a smudge. Respect for all is the guiding principle in Indigenous cultural practices.

Following smudging any spent matches, remaining embers and ash should be contained in a fire-proof container until they are cold to the touch and can be disposed of. The facilitator should also be aware of any fire concerns including the type fire detection equipment,
sprinklers, location of extinguishers, location of any combustible materials and emergency contact numbers.

**Facilities Considerations**
Across campus, the fire detection and suppression systems vary from building to building. Those wishing to smudge in rooms other than designated areas are asked to contact Cara Wehkamp to review the guidelines and explore the needs of the particular event.

When a fire system needs to be modified for smudging to occur, a work order will need to be placed with the Physical Resources Work Order Desk with the building, room number and time. The request should be copied to the Work Order Desk, Cara Wehkamp, Scott Hamilton and Karen Harrison.

When a system is modified, a person needs to be designated as Fire Watch. This person will call Campus Community Police Dispatch at (519) 840-5000 when the system is turned off and again, once the smoke dissipates and the system is turned back on.

If an alarm sounds during smudging, don’t panic. Immediately call Campus Community Police Dispatch and inform them of the situation.

**Contacts**
Campus Community Police Dispatch, in case of emergency or for notification (519) 840-5000
Cara Wehkamp, Student Life | cwehkamp@uoguelph.ca | Ext. 58687
Scott Hamilton, Fire Prevention | shamilton@fire.uoguelph.ca | Ext. 52071
Karen Harrison, Fire Prevention | kharrison@fire.uoguelph.ca | Ext. 52071

This document is meant to share information and serve as a guideline for university students, staff and faculty and those who are hosting First Nations, Métis and Inuit guests. With this in mind, we respect the diverse traditions and protocols of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and communities.