



Class in session for Seneca's new cannabis program

Graduate certificate first of its kind in Ontario

Jan. 9, 2020

The newly introduced cannabis program at Seneca kicked off at Seneca@York Campus this week. The one-year Cannabis Regulation & Quality Assurance graduate certificate program (/programs/fulltime/CAQC.html) — the first of its kind in Ontario — explores a new territory that promises exciting discoveries, innovative approaches and massive employment growth.

The program's inaugural cohort of students was selected from hundreds of applicants eager to get a head start in a field of education that aligns with Canada's fastest growing industry. Even though it was only a little over a year ago that Canada legalized cannabis, the industry is already highly regulated and there is a growing demand for experts to ensure compliance with the rules and quality standards for cannabis products, said Paola Battiston, Chair, School of Biological Sciences & Applied Chemistry.

"Our program builds on Seneca's expertise in pharmaceutical and cosmetic regulation and quality assurance," she said. "It is unique in that students are being taught by faculty who are either currently working in the industry or have relevant industry experience."

One of them, Prof. Gregory Staios, is teaching Cannabis Clinical this semester. According to him, Seneca's program will equip students with the expertise to ensure that both medical and recreational cannabis meet quality standards. At the same time, they will learn best practices within the Canadian and international regulatory and trade requirements for each step of product development — from plant physiology and pharmacology to cultivation, manufacturing and distribution.



From left: Zahra Hirji, Work-Integrated Learning Co-ordinator, Paola Battiston, Chair, School of Biological Sciences & Applied Chemistry, and Prof. Gregory Staios discuss course curriculum for the new Cannabis Regulation & Quality Assurance graduate certificate program.

"We are very excited about the initial response we have received from the students," Mr. Staios said. "They are aware that there is a change in how cannabis is perceived in society and many of them want to reduce the stigma around it by learning more about its potential in medicinal and recreational products."

Dr. Michael Verbora, a leading expert in cannabinoids and a health physician at the Seneca Medical Centre (</student-services-and-support/medical-centre.html>) at Newnham Campus, agrees. Seneca's cannabis program, he believes, is important because while the industry is expanding rapidly, there is a lack of accurate information and education about the plant and its properties.

"We need expert authorities and medical professionals to communicate to the broader public about cannabis," said Mr. Verbora, who is teaching Introduction to Cannabis. "Seneca has gone to extra lengths to source high-quality content and develop an intensive and vigorous foundation as well as understanding of cannabis and all the moving parts. Anyone looking to educate themselves on cannabis can potentially break into this industry through our program and make it part of their career."

Through Mr. Verbora, who is also Chief Medical Officer at Aleafia Health, Seneca's Faculty of Continuing Education & Training recently partnered with FoliEdge Academy Inc., a cloud-based cannabis education division of Aleafia Health, to develop and deliver new courses and programs focused on aspects of the cannabis industry in Canada. Some of the online self-study courses (<https://www.senecacollege.ca/ce/community/health-care/cannabis-industry-studies>) will include topics in cannabis, health and wellness, the Canadian legal and regulation system, customer experience and retail sales.

"The flexibility of the programming being offered is totally focused on the needs of students," said Jeff McCarthy, Dean, Faculty of Continuing Education & Training. "We are excited to apply the education techniques and the specific cannabis content from FoliEdge Academy to help students enhance their job opportunities and support the industry and government demand for new, relevant training for their employees."

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