

ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY

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A. PURPOSE

As an institution of higher learning and given its mandate under the *College and Institute Act*, Douglas College (the College) strives to serve the common good of society by providing for the honest pursuit and dissemination of truth, knowledge and understanding in an environment that fosters independent thinking and expression in all members of the College Community. The College also strives to support the best teaching and research, consistent with its Core Purpose, Vision and Values and policies. The purpose of this policy is to outline the College’s commitment to these goals, as reflected in its recognition and protection of Academic Freedom.

B. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Academic Employees at Douglas College.

C. DEFINITIONS

Academic Employees: Persons employed or contracted by the College and engaged in teaching and/or research within the College, including faculty members, instructional staff, research assistants, teaching assistants and/or tutors and academic administrators; may include external visiting speakers, researchers or scholars operating under the auspices of the College.

Academic Freedom: The freedom to engage in teaching, research, learning and/or other creative or intellectual work, and with the full and unrestricted consideration of any opinion, in order to expand knowledge, question, critique, teach and learn; Academic Freedom must be exercised with full respect for the rights and dignity of others, and for the scholarly obligation to base teaching and research in an honest search for truth, knowledge and understanding, grounded in research, data and evidence, and reliant upon reasoned discourse, scholarship and/or peer review, in a manner that is respectful, civil and consistent with applicable laws and College policies.

College Community: All College students, employees and Board members, and any other person contractually obligated to comply with College policy; for the purposes of this policy, includes any visiting speakers, researchers or scholars operating under the auspices of the College.

Support Person: A member of the College Community able to offer confidential support to participants in an investigation, and who may accompany the participant to any meetings relating to the process; the Support Person is not a party to or a participant in the investigation.

D. POLICY STATEMENTS

1. Douglas College will protect, support and maintain Academic Freedom, recognizing that teaching, research and academic inquiry often involve controversial matters and depend upon the honest interrogation of truth and knowledge without institutional censorship or reprisal.
2. Academic Freedom includes the freedom of Academic Employees to do the following:
 - i. Conduct teaching, including the frank exploration of controversial matters, and engage students in related discussion;
 - ii. Freely express their opinions on matters related to teaching, curricular responsibilities and institutional values, decisions and policy;
 - iii. Carry out research and disseminate the results in accordance with the academic policies of the College;
 - iv. Produce and perform creative works;
 - v. Engage in service to the College and College Community; and
 - vi. Participate in professional and representative academic bodies.
3. Where the legitimate exercise of Academic Freedom generates controversy and/or disputes among members of the College Community, the College will protect the right of participants to engage in debate in compliance with this policy.
4. Academic Freedom carries with it the duty to use that freedom responsibly and must be exercised in compliance with norms of civil discourse, applicable laws and College policies.
5. Academic Employees should foster the principle of Academic Freedom within the College. They are obliged to respect the rights of others in the academic and College Community to hold opinions that differ from their own, including opinions that arise from worldviews, values and intellectual traditions other than their own.
6. The Academic Freedom of Academic Employees does not vary according to the medium in which it is exercised. Academic Freedom is as essential to academic activities undertaken electronically as to those undertaken in speech, writing and/or other media.
7. As professionals and members of the College Community, Academic Employees may choose or be called upon to speak publicly in their area of expertise. In these cases, it is appropriate for them to identify themselves as College Employees, but they must also indicate that the views they are expressing are their own and that they do not speak for or on behalf of the College.

8. Librarians have a duty to promote and maintain intellectual freedom in the College in keeping with the principles expressed in the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' *Statement on Intellectual Freedom* and in the American Library Association's *Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*.

E. PROCEDURES

Informal Resolution

1. Academic Employees who believe they have experienced institutional censorship or reprisal relating to their exercise of Academic Freedom and who feel comfortable doing so are encouraged to attempt to resolve the situation themselves, directly and informally, by bringing the matter to the attention of the individual(s) whom they believe to have violated this policy, advising them that their behaviour or decision(s) are contrary to this policy, and asking that the behaviour cease immediately and/or that any relevant decision(s) be reversed.
2. Academic Employees may seek assistance in resolving the matter informally. Informal resolution may include a co-operative and voluntary process, such as a facilitated or mediated conversation between the parties. For assistance, Academic Employees should approach their Responsible Administrator (RA), unless the institutional censorship or reprisal is alleged to have been directed at them by their RA, in which case they may consult with another RA for additional support. At the Academic Employee's request, another appropriate College Support Person, such as a union representative, may participate in a supportive role alongside the Academic Employee.

Submitting an Allegation of a Violation of Academic Freedom

1. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, or if the Academic Employee does not wish to pursue informal resolution, the Academic Employee may report the allegation in writing to the College's Vice President, Academic and Provost (VPA) for review, unless the institutional censorship or reprisal is alleged to have been directed at them by the VPA, in which case the report should be submitted to the College President, who may investigate the report or delegate responsibility to another Vice President.
2. Allegations of violations of Academic Freedom should include the following:
 - Name and contact information of the person submitting the report;
 - A summary of the substance of the activity (e.g., teaching, research, debate) infringed upon by the alleged institutional censorship or reprisal, including specific date(s), time(s) and location(s);
 - Name(s) of the individual(s) who allegedly directed institutional censorship or reprisal at them;
 - Details about the alleged censorship or reprisal;
 - Name(s) of individuals witness to the alleged institutional censorship or reprisal, if any; and
 - Any supporting documentation available, such as email, text messages and/or social media posts.

3. The VPA (or College President or designate) will investigate the alleged violation of Academic Freedom and respond in writing to the individual who submitted the report. The response will indicate whether the alleged violation of Academic Freedom has been confirmed or dismissed and provide rationale. The response will normally be provided within thirty (30) days of receipt of the allegation; where this timeline cannot be met, the VPA (or College President or designate) will so advise the complainant and provide a revised timeline.
4. Where a violation of Academic Freedom is confirmed, the response will be considered by the VPA, in consultation with the College President (or, where the subject of the report is the VPA, the College President or designate, in consultation with the Chair of the College Board or President, respectively), in order to determine what further actions should be taken by the College.

F. SUPPORTING FORMS, DOCUMENTS, WEBSITES, RELATED POLICIES

Administration Policies

- *Acceptable Use of Computer and Information Technology*
- *Advertising and Promotional Activities on College Property*
- *Bullying and Harassment Prevention and Response*
- *College Use of Copyrighted Works*
- *Commercialization of Intellectual Property*
- *Conflict of Interest*
- *Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Human Subjects*
- *Human Rights*
- *Integrity in Research and Scholarship*
- *Respectful and Inclusive Environment*
- *Sexual Violence and Misconduct Prevention and Response*
- *Student Non-academic Misconduct*
- *Use of the Douglas College Concourse and Atriums*
- *Violence Prevention and Response*

Educational Policy

- *Academic Integrity*

American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights
Canadian Federation of Library Associations' Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries
Douglas College Code of Conduct
Douglas College Core Purpose, Vision and Values
Douglas College Research Ethics and Policies

G. RELATED ACTS AND REGULATIONS

BC's *College and Institute Act* [RSBC 1996], c. 52

H. RELATED COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

N/A