

POLICY ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Effective Date: May 19, 2023

Approval Authority: Senate

Supersedes /Amends: N/A

Policy Number: PRVPA-5

PREAMBLE

Academic Freedom (as defined below) is the foundation on which universities are built. Research (including research-creation), teaching, and service to scholarly organizations – the principal activities and endeavours of Academic Members (as defined below) – can only be fully exercised if they are undertaken without the constraint of political interference, disciplinary orthodoxies, or donor influence. Similarly, Academic Freedom guarantees that Academic Members are free to critique one’s university, its administration, government entities and society, subject to legal and policy restrictions.

At Concordia University (the “University”), Academic Freedom is enshrined notably, in collective agreements, the *Code of Rights and Responsibilities* ([BD-3](#)) and in the [Academic Code of Conduct](#).

The University’s *Policy on Academic Freedom* (the “Policy”), written in compliance with the [Act respecting academic freedom in the university sector, CQLR, chapter L-1.2](#), seeks to provide a stand-alone Policy and [Procedures regarding the Academic Freedom Committee](#) (the “Procedures”) to address complaints of violations of Academic Freedom. As such, the Policy and its related [Procedures](#) stand in relation to existing University policies, but do not replace or supersede the complaint, grievance or appeal procedures described in the existing collective or employment agreements and in any other [University policies and procedures](#).

The University values the diversity of scientific and scholarly voices, methodologies and opinions that make up its academic community; it does not seek, through this or any other Policy, to hinder the free exchange of ideas or limit the discussion of difficult or controversial subjects. The University further affirms that its Policy does not cover language or forms of expression that would be classified as hate speech or otherwise cause harm to a member of the community.

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SCOPE

This Policy and its related [Procedures](#) apply to all members of the University community and outlines the principles that govern Academic Freedom.

PURPOSE

In accordance with the [Act respecting academic freedom in the university sector, CQLR, chapter L-1.2](#) (the “Act”), the purpose of this Policy is to recognize, promote and protect Academic Freedom in order to support the mission of the University.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions shall apply:

“Academic Freedom” is defined by the Act as the right of the Academic Member to engage freely and without doctrinal, ideological or moral constraint, such as institutional censorship, in an activity through which the Academic Member contributes to carrying out the mission of the University.

That right includes the Academic Member’s freedom:

- a) to teach and to discuss;
- b) to conduct research, create and publish;
- c) to express their opinion about society and about an institution, including the University, and about any doctrine, dogma or opinion; and
- d) to freely take part in the activities of professional organizations or academic organizations.

Academic Freedom must be exercised in accordance with rigorous methodologies in the pursuit of knowledge generally recognized by the academic community and the university sector and taking into account the rights of other members of the community.

An Academic Member’s right to Academic Freedom does not supersede, replace or modify the academic or pedagogical requirements related to a course or program and must be exercised and interpreted in a manner consistent with the University’s policies, guidelines and practices.

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“Academic Freedom Committee” means the committee described in [section 2](#).

“Academic Member” means any member of the community who is engaged in academic endeavours described in the above definition of Academic Freedom, which contribute to carrying out the mission of the University and normally includes faculty members, librarians, researchers, postdoctoral fellows, and students.

“Chair” means the person who chairs the Academic Freedom Committee and who is responsible for university Academic Freedom, namely the Provost and Vice-President, Academic, or their delegate.

POLICY

1. Nothing in this Policy shall replace or supersede any complaint, grievance or appeal procedure set out in any collective or employee agreement to which the University is a party, the [Academic Code of Conduct](#), the *Code of Rights and Responsibilities (BD-3)*, the University Calendars or other [University policies or procedures](#).
2. The Academic Freedom Committee shall be composed of the following:
 - Chair
 - Vice-President, Research and Graduate Studies or their delegate
 - One member appointed by the Provost and Vice-President, Academic from the Academic Deans and University Librarian for a one-year term
 - Three full-time faculty or librarian members, appointed by the Concordia University Faculty Association (CUFA) for a three-year term
 - Two part-time faculty members, appointed by the Concordia University Part-time Faculty Association (CUPFA) for a two-year term
 - One graduate student, appointed by the Graduate Students’ Association for a one-year term
 - One undergraduate student, appointed by the Concordia Student Union for a one-year term
3. Members of the Academic Freedom Committee shall serve independently.

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4. The Academic Freedom Committee and/or the Chair, as appropriate, shall be responsible for:
 - overseeing the implementation of the present Policy;
 - examining complaints relating to a violation of Academic Freedom in accordance with the [Procedures](#) and, if applicable, making recommendations regarding such complaints; and
 - making recommendations on any other matter relating to Academic Freedom.
5. In consultation with the Academic Freedom Committee, the University shall establish:
 - awareness-raising and information campaigns for the community, including training intended to improve awareness and protection of Academic Freedom;
 - resources and instructional tools to ensure the promotion of and respect for Academic Freedom; and
 - mechanisms to receive and review comments from the members of the community regarding Academic Freedom.
6. The Office of the Provost and Vice-President, Academic shall also serve as an advisory service for general questions pertaining to the present Policy or its [Procedures](#) as well as any other general inquiries pertaining to Academic Freedom.
7. Without compromising confidentiality, the University will comply with the Act by producing an annual report on the implementation of the Policy, which will include a compilation of all complaints processed by the Academic Freedom Committee and the measures applied, if any. The University will also report to the University community.
8. In accordance with the timeline prescribed by the Act, this Policy must be reviewed at least once every 10 years.
9. The overall responsibility for implementing and recommending amendments to this Policy shall rest with the Provost and Vice-President, Academic.

Approved by Senate on May 19, 2023.