



Medicine Hat College Policy ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Policy #:	AC-02
Policy Authority:	Vice-President Academic and Provost
Executive Sponsor:	Vice-President Academic and Provost
Approved by:	President and CEO
Effective Date:	February 3, 2021
Next Mandatory Review Date:	February 3, 2026
Frequency of Review:	Every 5 years

1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

This policy defines academic freedom and outlines what it means at Medicine Hat College (MHC.) It ensures academic freedom is exercised ethically and responsibly while maintaining a respectful, safe, and open environment.

2. POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to faculty and current students of MHC.

3. DEFINITIONS

- **Academic Freedom:** the freedom of faculty and students to engage in teaching, learning, research, or other creative work in order to expand knowledge and to do so in an atmosphere of free enquiry and discourse.
- **Faculty:** an academic staff member employed by the college pursuant to the Post-secondary Learning Act.

4. PRINCIPLES

4.1 MHC supports a teaching, learning, and research environment that encourages academic freedom. Faculty and students have rights and privileges to engage in independent thinking and expression, to pursue avenues of enquiry, and to engage in full and unrestricted consideration of any idea. These rights carry with them the duty and responsibility to use that freedom in a way that is consistent with the educational and scholarly pursuit for truth, knowledge, and understanding.

4.2 Post-secondary educational institutions serve the common good of a democratic society through searching for and disseminating knowledge, truth, and understanding as well as fostering independent thinking and expression. These ends cannot be achieved without academic freedom.

5. DIRECTIVES

5.1 Faculty have academic freedom to pursue the following, without institutional censorship or reprisal:

- (a) conduct teaching and related discussions;
- (b) express opinions freely on matters related to teaching and curricular responsibilities;
- (c) carry out research and disseminate the results;
- (d) produce and perform creative work;
- (e) engage in service to the institution and community;
- (f) acquire, preserve, and provide access to the widest range of materials in all formats;
- (g) participate in professional and representative academic bodies; and
- (h) express opinions freely about the institution and matters related to their courses of study.

5.2 Students have academic freedom to pursue the following, without institutional censorship or reprisal:

- (a) raise for discussion in a class, aspects of a topic pertinent to the subject matter of that class;
- (b) meet on campus to discuss topics or issues;
- (c) carry out research and disseminate the results under the guidance of faculty or other college employees;
- (d) produce and perform creative works, under the guidance of faculty or other college employees;
- (e) engage in services to the institution and community; and
- (f) express opinions freely about the institution and matters related to their courses of study.

5.3 As professionals, faculty may choose or be called upon to speak publicly, or publish, in an area of expertise. In these cases, it is appropriate for them to identify themselves as college employees, but they should not present their views as the official position of the MHC.

5.4 The rights of faculty and students to exercise their academic freedom do not vary according to the medium or place in which they are exercised. These rights are as essential to academic activities undertaken electronically as those undertaken in speech, writing, and/or other media.

5.5 The college has the responsibility to foster and defend intellectual honesty, freedom of enquiry, and free expression of ideas.

5.6 Teaching and academic enquiry often involves controversial matters. Faculty and other college employees are free to conduct frank discussions of controversial matters and to conduct research and other forms of enquiry into them.

5.7 Academic freedom supports the right to examine, question, research, teach, and learn in an environment that supports the need to investigate, speculate, and comment without penalty or sanction. Researchers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results.

5.8 Limits to Academic Freedom

5.8.1 While academic freedom is central to the college and to academia at large, it does not imply rights greater than those granted by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the laws of Canada. No freedom is absolute and no right is unlimited, and therefore those who claim the right to academic freedom also accept the responsibility of being open minded, respectful, and honest.

5.8.2 The right to academic freedom does not negate any obligations, entitlements, or responsibilities individuals may have as members of a professional association, through licensure, or under the college's Code of Conduct policy.

5.8.3 Actions not protected by this policy include

- any publication or display that is likely to expose a person or class of persons to hatred or contempt based on the protected grounds outlined in the Alberta Human Rights Act;
- any publication or display that includes potentially defamatory material;
- any publication or display that includes illicit material, except in instances where such material is being used for bona fide teaching or research purposes;
- any intentional public divulgement of privileged college information; or
- the publication or presentation of scholarly activities that are evidenced to have been conducted in a manner inconsistent with the principles of research ethics, academic rigour, and academic integrity.

5.9 Breaches of this policy will be subject to the college's established policies and procedures for misconduct for students, staff, and faculty. Violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal or expulsion. Violations of the law will be reported to the appropriate college and law enforcement authorities and may result in dismissal.

5.10 Faculty or students who believe that their academic freedom has been infringed may apply to the Vice-President Academic and Provost, who will establish an ad-hoc committee to resolve the issue. The committee will comprise of two academic deans (neither of whom are members of the School of the person being heard) and two faculty members (neither of whom are members of the School of the person being heard.) In the event of a tie, the Vice-President Academic and Provost will review the case and render a decision which is final and binding. The committee will communicate the decision in writing to the affected parties.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 **The college** is responsible for

- (a) ensuring academic freedom is maintained within the institution; and
- (b) respecting and promoting open and respectful debate about its governance and practices.

6.2 Faculty and students are responsible for

- (a) adhering to college and program policies, procedures, processes and the accepted standards of one's profession and/or discipline;
- (b) recognizing MHC's right and obligation to manage its affairs according to its mission and mandate; and
- (c) maintaining accuracy, integrity, and academic honesty in the fulfillment of their role.

7. APPLICABLE LEGISLATION/REGULATIONS

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
Canadian Human Rights Act
Criminal Code of Canada
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
Post-Secondary Learning Act

8. RELATED POLICIES

AC-08 Evaluation of Student Learning
HR-01 Respectful Work and Learning Environment
HR-10 Code of Conduct
SD-04 Student Non-Academic Misconduct
9.2 Integrity in Research and Scholarship
9.4 Applied Research
9.5 Intellectual Property and Copyright
9.6 Copyright Compliance
9.7 Ethical Conduct Involving Human Participants

9. RELATED PROCEDURES

PR-HR-01-01 Respectful Work and Learning Environment – Complaint Resolution
PR-SD-04-01 Student Non-Academic Misconduct

10. RELATED INFORMATION

1940 AAUP Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, with 1970 interpretive comments.

<http://www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure>

Canadian Library Association Position Statement on Intellectual Freedom, 2015.

http://cla.ca/wp-content/uploads/CLA_Intellectual_Freedom_Position Stmt_27sept2015_ltrhd.pdf

ORIGINAL COPY SIGNED

Kevin Shufflebotham
President and CEO

Date: February 3, 2021

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Vicky Roy
Vice-President Academic and
Provost

Date: February 3, 2021

DOCUMENT HISTORY

February 2015	Policy approved
February 2021	Revised policy approved