

TITLE: ACADEMIC FREEDOM

POLICY STATEMENT:

Red Deer College (RDC) values and protects the principles of academic freedom, including freedom of inquiry, discourse, teaching, scholarly activity, and publication. Red Deer College maintains an atmosphere that fosters intellectual independence and protects Academic Freedom.

PURPOSE:

This policy outlines who has Academic Freedom at RDC and the College's role in protecting Academic Freedom. Academic freedom is essential to the role of higher education institutions in a democratic society. RDC is committed to the pursuit of knowledge and its communication to others, including students and the broader community.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all faculty, leadership, and students of RDC. The Rights and Responsibilities of Academic Freedom vary according to one's role.

PRINCIPLES:

1. Policies at RDC:
 - 1.1. Treat all persons fairly and respectfully.
 - 1.2. Are non-discriminatory and non-intrusive.
 - 1.3. Incorporate open, honest and timely communication.
 - 1.4. Are made in a timely manner.
 - 1.5. Provide appropriate confidentiality and privacy.
 - 1.6. Provide appropriate access to the College and education.
 - 1.7. Ensure that all persons have access to informed support regarding policies, procedures, rights and responsibilities.
 - 1.8. Operate with clear written expectations for conduct and handling of complaints.
 - 1.9. Meet all regulatory standards.
 - 1.10. Maintain and clearly state a high standard of instruction and administration in all areas of educational programs and services.
 - 1.11. Are communicated in alternate forms to those who require such accommodation.

Specific for this Policy:

1. This Policy incorporates the principles expressed in the Universities Canada [Statement on Academic Freedom](#) (October 25, 2011) and the Canadian Association of University Teachers [Policy Statement on Academic Freedom](#) (November 2011).
2. Following Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC), faculty "and students must be free to examine and to test all knowledge appropriate to their disciplines as judged by the academic community in general" (CAQC, 2015). Faculty must be free to take

intellectual risks and tackle controversial subjects in their teaching, research, discourse, and scholarship without fear of censure or reprisal.

3. In addition to Academic Freedom, faculty and students are not hindered or impeded in exercising their civil rights as citizens, including the right to contribute to social change through freely expressing their opinion of public policies and of policies affecting higher education.
4. Unlike the broader concept of freedom of speech, academic freedom is based on institutional integrity, rigorous standards for enquiry, and institutional autonomy, which allow Red Deer College to set its research and educational priorities.
5. Freedom of inquiry is tempered by a high degree of respect for evidence, impartial reasoning and honesty in reporting.
6. Differences in opinion are valued because the expression of unpopular opinions and research advances attainment of knowledge. Prevailing opinion is sometimes neither exhaustive nor comprehensive.

DEFINITION:

Academic Freedom: is a right of faculty and students; it is a responsibility for the leadership of Red Deer College. Academic Freedom is fundamental to the mandate of higher education institutions to pursue and disseminate knowledge and educate students. As a result, all members of the College's leadership have the responsibility to defend and protect Academic Freedom. Academic Freedom is the freedom to teach and conduct research in an academic environment; is the freedom to produce and perform creative works; protects the rights of faculty to teach and the learner to learn; includes the right to freely communicate knowledge and the results of research and scholarship. Academic Freedom includes the right of faculty to engage in service to the College and the community and to critique and offer commentary on policies and decisions of Red Deer College and the wider system without fear of reprisal or censure.

GUIDELINES:

Academic freedom must be based on reasoned discourse, rigorous extensive research and scholarship, or peer review.

1. Academic freedom is constrained by the professional standards of the relevant discipline and the responsibility of the institution to organize its academic mission.
2. The insistence on professional standards speaks to the rigor of the enquiry and not to its outcome.
3. **Academic Freedom Responsibilities of RDC Leadership:**
 - 3.1. RDC governing bodies and senior officers protect and promote academic freedom.
 - 3.2. RDC ensures that funding and other partnerships do not unduly interfere with the autonomy of the College or of individuals in deciding what is studied or taught and how.
 - 3.3. RDC's President communicates the values around academic freedom to internal and external stakeholders.

- 3.4. RDC defends academic freedom against interpretations that are too broad, narrow, or vague, and the claims that may arise from such definitions using the Complaint Resolution Procedure.
- 3.5. RDC and its governing bodies are committed to integrity and are free to act in the institution's best interests in order to protect academic freedom.
- 3.6. RDC has an obligation to ensure that students' human rights are respected and that they are encouraged to pursue their education according to the principles of academic freedom.

4. Academic Freedom Rights and Responsibilities of RDC Faculty:

- 4.1. Faculty are committed to the highest ethical standards in their teaching and research.
- 4.2. Faculty are free to examine data, question assumptions and be guided by evidence.
- 4.3. Faculty are responsible to submit their knowledge and claims to rigorous and public review by peers who are experts in the subject matter under consideration and to ground their arguments in the best available evidence.
- 4.4. Faculty have an obligation to ensure that students' human rights are respected and that they are encouraged to pursue their education according to the principles of academic freedom.
- 4.5. Faculty share with RDC Leadership the responsibility of ensuring that pressures from funding and other types of partnerships do not unduly influence the intellectual work of the College.
- 4.6. Faculty have the right to teach and facilitate learning in course subjects without fear of censure. Faculty members have the right to select course materials, content, methodology, and sequence of subjects. In some disciplines, this may require coordination as well as a need for collaboration and agreement among faculty on such matters as general course content, syllabi, and examinations.
- 4.7. Faculty members have the right to participate in College governance by providing counsel and advice on matters of policy, including strategic planning, program and student evaluation and services to students. They do so without fear of censure and undue interference.
- 4.8. Faculty, as citizens and members of learned professions, have a right to personal and professional opinions, no matter how unpopular they may be. Faculty have the right to critique and offer commentary on governance, policies and decisions of RDC and the wider system and to state these publicly without censorship or fear of harassment or reprisal. Because of their special position as faculty members, they must recognize that both their institution and their professional association may be judged by their public statements. Consequently, they must avoid creating the impression that they speak for the institution, unless they are expressly delegated that responsibility.

5. Academic Freedom Rights and Responsibilities of Students

- 5.1. Students have the right to explore topics and explore/create knowledge within their disciplines without fear of reprisal or censure.

- 5.2. Students “have the right to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgement about matters of opinion.” ([American Association of University Professors, Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students](#)).
- 5.3. Students, in accordance with the [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#), “assume full responsibility for learning and for knowledge of course material.”

PROCEDURE:

Complaint Resolution

1. In cases where College policies or decisions appear to infringe upon the academic freedoms in this policy, any affected person may apply, in writing, to the Vice President Academic who calls for an ad hoc committee to resolve the issue.
2. The ad hoc committee is comprised of two members appointed by the Faculty Association of Red Deer College, plus two members appointed by the Vice President Academic.
3. Those members then select on a simple plurality a fifth member. The five members so constituted then select a Chair amongst them who presides at the meetings of the ad hoc committee.
4. The ad hoc committee may investigate the complaint by requesting written submissions, interviewing individuals, and by holding hearings with the complainant and respondent present. The ad hoc committee establishes its process depending on the nature of the complaint and is only constrained by the principles of natural justice.
5. Decisions of the ad hoc committee are delivered in writing by the Chair to the persons who made submissions, to the committee, to the Faculty Association and to the Office of the Vice President Academic. The decision may include recommendations of remedy should the complaint be upheld. The decisions of the ad hoc committee are final and binding.

OFFICER RESPONSIBLE: Chair, Academic Council

POLICY CATEGORY: Academic Policy

RECOMMENDING AUTHORITY: Academic Council

CONSULTATION FOR REVIEW: Academic Council, Academic Policy Committee, Curriculum Committee, Faculty, Deans’ Council, Service Council, School Councils

POLICY REVIEW DATE: September 2021

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2017

REVISION HISTORY: March 18, 1987
 April 7, 2003
 March 1, 2012
 July 1, 2017

RELATED POLICIES:

- [Conflicts of Interest and Mandatory Disclosure](#)
- [Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Participants](#)
- [Integrity In Research and Scholarship](#)
- [Intellectual Property](#)
- [Research and the Promotion of Innovation](#)
- [Scholarly Activity At Red Deer College](#)
- [Social Media](#)
- [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

CONNECTION TO BOARD POLICIES:

All RDC policies support relevant Board of Governors policies.