

Academic Freedom Policy			
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Objectives

Academic freedom is essential in higher education and society to transmit and ensure the advancement of knowledge and understanding. LaSalle College Vancouver protects that freedom for all faculty members and students in teaching, learning, researching, discussing, creating, exhibiting or publishing. For the maintenance of excellence in education and society, faculty members and students are encouraged to be free, within the law, from internal or external restraints that would unreasonably restrict their academic endeavours.

This policy outlines the principles, practices and responsibilities regarding academic freedom for the LaSalle College Vancouver community.

Scope

All members of LaSalle College Vancouver, employees and students, as well as visitors, must recognize this fundamental principle and must share responsibility for supporting, safeguarding, and preserving this freedom.

Exclusions

There are no exclusions to this policy.

Principles of Academic Freedom

According to standards outlined in the *AUCC Statement on Academic Freedom (see Appendix I)*, academic freedom includes, but is not limited to:

- the right to freely communicate knowledge and the results of research in ones fields of expertise;
- the allowance for faculty and students to be free to take intellectual risks and challenge controversial subjects in their teaching, learning, creative activities, study, discussion and research without hindrance by the College or any of its representatives;
- the views expressed by faculty are based on solid research, data and evidence in their fields of expertise.

The free and unfettered exchange of ideas is vital to the health of any academic institution. LCV is committed to upholding the tenets of academic freedom. Faculty are assured of freedom in how they teach, and have the autonomy to express opinions, exchange ideas, and address public issues both inside and beyond the classroom without institutional reprisal.

Faculty also have freedom to research, comment on and publish their findings on potentially controversial matters in the spirit of critical inquiry and truth. They are free to pursue the best means for realizing the goals and objectives set forth in the institution's values, vision and mission statements, so long as they are in accordance with standards of propriety and professional conduct. It is the role of faculty to bring to the

teaching/learning environment their expertise and enthusiasm and to convey the relevant information they possess to students. Faculty should endeavor to create an atmosphere in the classroom and/or laboratory that is conducive to the attainment of the course objectives and course syllabi. In accordance with this, faculty exercise the freedom to be creative in these pursuits.

LaSalle College Vancouver employees and students must at all times conduct themselves in a professional manner that respects LaSalle College Vancouver's values and behavioural standards.

Students shall not be penalized for holding a reasoned viewpoint on a particular issue that varies from the position of the College or of a faculty member.

Responsibilities related to Academic Freedom

The College must adopt and distribute to all members of the College community a statement of the principles of academic freedom as established by the Board of Governors, assuring freedom in teaching, creative activities, research and publication. The College must ensure that it maintains an atmosphere in which academic freedom exists, develops processes by which the principles and responsibilities of academic freedom are upheld and ensures that the principles of natural justice are followed in the event of alleged violations of this policy.

Faculty members are responsible for safeguarding the academic freedom of their students to learn by: encouraging free inquiry into controversial issues, presenting alternative viewpoints, refraining from undue influence of the process of learning, taking dissenting student opinions seriously and offering a forum for discussion.

If any individual believes that a faculty member is advocating a position clearly at variance from the College's principles of academic freedom, the individual should first approach the faculty member directly and privately for clarification.

If this attempt is not successful, the individual should bring evidence to the CAO.

Retractions or modification of speech by faculty members are not required nor expected on the basis of a complaint received against them.

The procedures for handling allegations are covered in the Student Conduct Policy and Dispute Resolution Policy.

The violation of this policy or any applicable laws or regulations may result in disciplinary action, ranging from warning to dismissal. Depending on the severity, violations of laws and regulations may also result in both civil and criminal penalties, including fines and imprisonment.

Related legislation

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
BC Human Rights Code

Further Information

- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada/Media Room/News: Statement on Academic Freedom, October 25, 2011. <http://www.univcan.ca/media-room/media-releases/statement-on-academic-freedom/> (see Appendix I, this policy)
- Intellectual Property Policy
- Academic Complaints and Appeals Policy

**“Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada *Statement on Academic Freedom* -
October 25, 2011**

What is academic freedom?

Academic freedom is the freedom to teach and conduct research in an academic environment. Academic freedom is fundamental to the mandate of universities to pursue truth, educate students and disseminate knowledge and understanding.

In teaching, academic freedom is fundamental to the protection of the rights of the teacher to teach and of the student to learn. In research and scholarship, it is critical to advancing knowledge. Academic freedom includes the right to freely communicate knowledge and the results of research and scholarship.

Unlike the broader concept of freedom of speech, academic freedom must be based on institutional integrity, rigorous standards for enquiry and institutional autonomy, which allows universities to set their research and educational priorities.

Why is academic freedom important to Canada?

Academic freedom does not exist for its own sake, but rather for important social purposes. Academic freedom is essential to the role of universities in a democratic society. Universities are committed to the pursuit of truth and its communication to others, including students and the broader community. To do this, faculty must be free to take intellectual risks and tackle controversial subjects in their teaching, research and scholarship.

For Canadians, it is important to know that views expressed by faculty are based on solid research, data and evidence, and that universities are autonomous and responsible institutions committed to the principles of integrity.

The responsibilities of academic freedom

Evidence and truth are the guiding principles for universities and the community of scholars that make up their faculty and students. Thus, academic freedom must be based on reasoned discourse, rigorous extensive research and scholarship, and peer review.

Academic freedom is constrained by the professional standards of the relevant discipline and the responsibility of the institution to organize its academic mission. The insistence on professional standards speaks to the rigor of the enquiry and not to its outcome.

The constraint of institutional requirements recognizes simply that the academic mission, like other work, has to be organized according to institutional needs. This includes the institution's responsibility to select and appoint faculty and staff, to admit and discipline students, to establish and control curriculum, to make organizational arrangements for the conduct of academic work, to certify completion of a program and to grant degrees.

Roles and responsibilities

University leadership: It is a major responsibility of university governing bodies and senior officers to protect and promote academic freedom. This includes ensuring that funding and other partnerships do not interfere with autonomy in deciding what is studied and how. Canada's university presidents must play a leadership role in communicating the values around academic freedom to internal and external stakeholders. The university must also defend academic freedom against interpretations that are excessive or too loose, and the claims that may spring from such definitions.

To ensure and protect academic freedom, universities must be autonomous, with their governing bodies committed to integrity and free to act in the institution's best interests.

Universities must also ensure that the rights and freedoms of others are respected, and that academic freedom is exercised in a reasonable and responsible manner.

Faculty: Faculty must be committed to the highest ethical standards in their teaching and research. They must be free to examine data, question assumptions and be guided by evidence.

Faculty have an equal responsibility 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.

Faculty members and university leaders 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.

Faculty also share with university leadership the responsibility of ensuring that pressures from funding and other types of partnerships do not unduly influence the intellectual work of the university.”¹

¹ Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada/Media Room/News: Statement on Academic Freedom, October 25, 2011. <http://www.univcan.ca/media-room/media-releases/statement-on-academic-freedom/>