



<b>Academic Freedom</b>	
<b>Category:</b> Academic	<b>Approval Date:</b> November 21, 2022
<b>Policy Owner:</b> Vice President Academic and Provost	<b>Effective Date:</b> November 21, 2022
<b>Policy Administrator:</b> Manager, Judicial and Academic Affairs	<b>Review Period:</b> 5 years
<b>Recommended by:</b> Academic Council/Deans' Council	
<b>Associated Documents</b> Academic Freedom Complaints Procedure	

## PURPOSE

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

## SCOPE

Academic Freedom is the absolute anchor of higher education. It is the freedom of faculty to pursue truth by examining, questioning, commenting, and teaching without regards to received doctrine. It is the freedom to disseminate knowledge and learned opinions in the classroom and to the wider world without fear of censorship or prohibition. Academic Freedom does not imply a faculty member's neutrality. Rather Academic Freedom makes promotion of scholarly judgement and opinion possible. Academic Freedom carries an obligation to use that freedom in a responsible manner that aligns with the scholar's commitment to ground research and teaching in an honest search for knowledge. Aspects of Academic Freedom specific to Red Deer Polytechnic are described below. The support and defense of Academic Freedom is the responsibility of all faculty, leadership, and students of the Polytechnic. The Rights and Responsibilities afforded under Academic Freedom will vary according to one's role.

## **POLICY**

1. The Polytechnic adheres to the principles of academic freedom, including freedom of inquiry, discourse, teaching, scholarly activity, and scholarship. It maintains an atmosphere that fosters intellectual independence and protects Academic Freedom.\*
2. Academic Freedom, does not limit or impede a faculty member's ability to exercise 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.
3. Unlike the broader concept of freedom of expression, academic freedom is based on institutional integrity, rigorous standards for enquiry, and institutional autonomy, which allow Red Deer Polytechnic to set its research and educational priorities.
4. Academic Freedom is tempered by a high degree of respect for evidence, impartial reasoning and honesty in reporting.
5. 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.
6. Academic freedom must be based on reasoned discourse, rigorous extensive research and scholarship, or peer review.
7. Academic freedom is constrained by the professional standards of the relevant discipline and the responsibility of the institution to organize its academic mission.
8. The insistence on professional standards speaks to the rigor of the enquiry and not to its outcome.

### ***Academic Freedom Responsibilities of Red Deer Polytechnic Leadership:***

1. Governing bodies and senior officers protect and promote academic freedom.
2. The Polytechnic ensures that funding bodies and research-partners (industry, community, or other) in research projects (applied or otherwise), do not unduly interfere with the autonomy of the Polytechnic or of individuals in deciding what is studied or taught and how.
3. The President communicates the values around academic freedom to internal and external stakeholders.
4. The Polytechnic defends academic freedom against interpretations that are too broad, narrow, or vague, and the claims that may arise from such definitions using the *Academic Freedom-Complaint Resolution Procedure*.
5. The Polytechnic 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.
6. The Polytechnic 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.

### ***Academic Freedom Rights and Responsibilities of Red Deer Polytechnic Faculty***

1. Faculty are committed to the highest ethical standards in their teaching and research.

2. Faculty are free to examine data, question assumptions and be guided by evidence.
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. Faculty have an obligation to ensure that human rights, as described in The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, are respected
5. Faculty share with Red Deer Polytechnic Leadership the responsibility of ensuring that pressures from funding and other types of partnerships do not unduly influence the intellectual work of the Polytechnic.
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.
7. Faculty members have the right to participate in 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.
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 the Polytechnic, of their Association, and the wider system, and to state these publicly without censorship or fear of harassment or reprisal. Due to 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 or the association, unless they are expressly delegated that responsibility.

## **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 Freedom of Expression

## **DEFINITIONS**

---

\* The concepts and some of the wording used in this policy are taken from Universities Canada [Statement on Academic Freedom](#) (October 25, 2011), the Canadian Association of University Teachers [Policy Statement on Academic Freedom](#) (November 2018), and Campus Alberta Quality Council.