



Approval Body	Academic Council
Policy Sponsor	President and CEO
Policy Administrator(s)	Provost and VP Academic
Effective Date	July 1, 2022

First Approved	Last Major Revision	Last Reviewed
July 1, 2008	April 18, 2022	April 18, 2022

Academic Freedom Policy

Purpose

Lethbridge College recognizes that the concept of Academic Freedom provides important context related to the conduct of Scholarly Activities. Academic Freedom offers Academic Staff and Students who are engaged in Scholarly Activity the opportunity and protection for reflective thought and open dialogue, both of which are crucial to the vitality of the College and to the advancement of knowledge. This freedom is balanced by the principles of Professional Competence and Moral Constraint in the pursuit of knowledge, in the conduct of Applied Research, in the advancement of opinion and challenge to prevailing thought, and in the exercise of Applied Research and Scholarly Activity. Academic Freedom is further balanced by an acknowledgment that Scholarly Activity is supported by Professional Competence and undertaken in support of the mandate and mission of Lethbridge College.

Scope and Limits

The Academic Freedom Policy applies to Academic Staff and Students as it relates to their pursuit of Scholarly Activities. While all Members of the College Community have the right to Freedom of Expression, only Academic Staff and Students engaged in Scholarly Activity as it relates to their Academic Discipline have the right to Academic Freedom. Individuals seeking information related to Freedom of Expression should refer to the Board of Governors' [Freedom of Expression Statement](#) and the [Respectful Campus Policy](#).

Where there is conflict or incompatibility between this policy and a provision of the Lethbridge College Faculty Association (LCFA) [collective agreement](#), the provisions of the collective agreement will apply.

Definitions



Defined terms are capitalized throughout this Policy.

Academic Administrator	means an Employee who holds an academic administrative position (i.e. vice-president, centre dean, centre associate dean), or another academic person outside the scope of the Lethbridge College Faculty Association agreement that has been designated by the president and CEO.
Academic Discipline	means a branch of learning or scholarly instruction that inform Academic Staff and Students' approaches to understanding and investigating new knowledge, ways of working, and perspectives on the world around them.
Academic Freedom	means the collective freedom of Academic Staff and Students to conduct research and disseminate ideas or facts without religious, political, or institutional restrictions. It includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• freedom of inquiry;• freedom to challenge conventional thought;• freedom to express one's opinion about the institution, its administration, or the system in which one works; and• freedom from institutional censorship.
Academic Staff	means members of the Lethbridge College Faculty Association (LCFA), Employees whose primary job duties include instruction or research, and Academic Administrators.
Applied Research	means the application of existing scholarship or scientific or professional knowledge to develop practical applications in the sciences, social sciences or humanities.
Freedom of Expression	means freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication.
Frivolous	means a complaint that has no serious purpose or value or may have little merit and be trivial, and is part of a pattern of conduct that amounts to an abuse of the right of access, interferes with the operations of the institution, or is made in bad faith or for a purpose other than to obtain access.
Institutional Governance	means the structures, systems, practices, and processes employed to organize and manage the College; for example, representative participation on institutional boards and committees.
Moral Constraint	means identification of bias through the means of limiting or restricting one's own feelings and behaviours because of their standards of behaviour or beliefs concerning what is and is not acceptable for them to do (i.e. reasoning, consequences, honest, fair, ethical).

Professional Competence means demonstrating the relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the tasks that meet the accepted scope of professional practice set out by the relevant regulatory body (i.e. professional association, regulatory college, accreditation body).

Scholarly Activity (ies) means activities that develop, create, and advance existing knowledge through systematic inquiry, including the dissemination of knowledge to the public through academic publications and intellectual property (i.e. patents).

Some examples of scholarly activities are:

- teaching;
- research;
- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL);
- creative activities such as original contributions in the fine, performing, literary, graphic, and digital arts.

Vexatious means that the complaint is without merit, is pursued in a manner that is malicious, intended to inconvenience, embarrass or harass the recipient or is a pattern of conduct by the complainant that amounts to the misuse of the complaints processes and procedures.

Policy Statements

1. Lethbridge College acknowledges that Academic Staff and Students engaged in Scholarly Activity have a right to Academic Freedom. This includes the right to teach, learn, study, research and publish without fear of sanction, discipline, the threat of reprisal or discrimination by the institution. To this end the College will:
 - a. support Academic Staff and Students' right to Academic Freedom whenever possible provided it is exercised in a way that is safe and respectful;
 - b. only limit Academic Freedom in ways that are consistent with its mission, vision and strategies; and
 - c. consider all allegations that Academic Freedom has been violated or compromised brought to its attention promptly and in a way that ensures that the principles of natural justice and peer review are observed.
2. The College recognizes that no freedom is absolute, and no right is unlimited. The right to Academic Freedom is balanced by the responsibility to demonstrate the highest standards of professional integrity, ethical conduct, Moral Constraint, and academic rigour and must be based on institutional integrity, and rigorous standards for inquiry, while allowing institutional autonomy to set research and educational priorities.
3. Breaches of this policy will be subject to the College's established misconduct procedures and will result in sanctions and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination. Breaches that violate the law or any licensing obligations within the context of one's academic or non-academic role will be reported to the appropriate enforcement authorities.

Policy Appendices

Appendix A [Academic Freedom Rights, Responsibilities and Limits](#)

Policy Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

[Academic Freedom Claims](#)

Legislated References

[Human Rights Act, RSA 2000, c A-25.5](#)
[Post-secondary Learning Act, SA 2003, c P-19.5](#)

Other References

[Campus Alberta Quality Control Handbook](#)
[LCFA Agreement](#)

Related Lethbridge College Policies

[Academic Program](#)
[Applied Research and Scholarship](#)
[Freedom of Expression Statement](#)
[Lethbridge College Code of Conduct](#)
[Intellectual Property](#)
[Records Management](#)
[Respectful Campus](#)
[Student Rights and Code of Conduct](#)
[Use of Information Technology Resources](#)

Related Board of Governors Policies

[EL-1 Treatment of Students](#)
[EL-2 Treatment of Staff](#)
[EL-10 Access to Education](#)
[EL-11 Ethical Research](#)

Parent Policy	Academic Freedom
Policy Sponsor	President and CEO
Policy Administrator(s)	Provost and VP Academic
Appendix	A

Academic Freedom Rights, Responsibilities and Limits



*Defined terms are capitalized throughout this Policy.
Refer to the parent Policy and the Policy Framework for definitions.*

A: Academic Freedom Rights

1. Academic Staff acting within the scope of their work-related duties are entitled to the right to Academic Freedom. This includes the right to:
 - a. complete their instructional assignments and academic service as they consider appropriate, provided they fulfill their duties and responsibilities as defined by the LCFA Collective Agreement and applicable Lethbridge College policy;
 - b. determine how they complete their instructional assignments as they deem fit This means the right to select course materials and content, make assignments and assess Student performance, and employ the pedagogical approach they believe is appropriate to respectfully teach and discuss any aspect of a topic that is relevant to their Scholarly;
 - c. participate in curriculum design and course development, in accordance with the [Academic Program Policy](#);
 - d. conduct Scholarly Activity, including the presentation, dissemination and publication of the results according to the academic standards of their discipline;
 - e. pursue knowledge and social advancement through Scholarly Activity and community service;
 - f. participate in Institutional Governance and other opportunities for internal discussion and input as facilitated through the Lethbridge College Faculty Association and other areas; and
 - g. offer their own opinions and perspectives on all matters related to their Scholarly Activities.
2. Students, when engaged in Scholarly Activity, have the right to:
 - a. respectfully raise for discussion any aspect of a topic that is relevant to their understanding of the Scholarly Activity they are engaged in;

- b. participate in Institutional Governance and other opportunities for internal discussion and input as facilitated through the Lethbridge College Student's Association and other areas;
- c. assemble on campus for the purpose of discussion of any topic or issue related to their Scholarly Activities; and
- d. offer their own opinions and perspectives on all matters related to their Scholarly Activities.

B: Academic Freedom Responsibilities

1. Academic Staff and Students have the right to Academic Freedom provided they:
 - a. follow the law and adhere to College-wide and program policies, procedures, processes, and accepted professional standards of their discipline;
 - b. exercise their right responsibly and in ways that recognize and respect the dignity of others, contributes to an environment where it is possible for everyone to live, work, and study in an environment free from harmful behaviours such as bullying and harassment in accordance with the [Respectful Campus Policy](#) and [Applied Research and Scholarship Policy](#) (Academic Staff) and the [Student Rights and Code of Conduct Policy](#) (Students);
 - c. act honestly and in good faith;
 - d. support, protect and preserve the exercise of Academic Freedom; and
 - e. achieve the learning outcomes of the Scholarly Activity, the Student core competencies, governmental requirements, and accreditation requirements.

C: Limits to Academic Freedom

1. Academic Freedom protects legitimate, serious debate and sincerely held beliefs that are supported by facts, knowledge, science or data. The College will apply the principles of Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression broadly, however, the right to the Academic Freedom of Academic Staff, Students and the institution must be balanced with the college's responsibility to ensure a safe and healthy work and learning environment for All Members of the College Community. This means that the College must impose reasonable limits on the right to Academic Freedom in exceptional circumstances. Examples of limits to Academic Freedom include, but are not limited to:
 - when the speech or actions are harassing or racist;
 - strays from the speaker's Academic Discipline;
 - allowing the claim will, or has real potential to, cause harm, misinform or undermine the College's mission, vision and values;
 - when Lethbridge College policy, procedure or practice was not followed; or
 - when the course or program outcomes, government and/or accreditation requirements were not observed.
2. The college is responsible to prove that any limits to Academic Freedom imposed on Academic Staff and Students are reasonably justifiable.

D: Academic Freedom Claims

1. The Adjudication of Academic Freedom claims will be conducted under the authority of the Provost and VP Academic in an efficient, confidential manner that observes the principles of administrative justice.

Academic Staff and Students that believe their right to Academic Freedom has been violated or compromised within or outside the auspices of Lethbridge College can initiate the claims process by following the steps outlined in the [Academic Freedom Claims Standard Operating Procedure](#).

2. To support the mandate of the Provost and VP Academic to protect Academic Freedom an independent, diverse and multi-disciplinary committee will be established to adjudicate Academic Freedom claims. The Provost and VP Academic will provide oversight and resources to the committee.
3. Every Academic Freedom Claim received by the College will be reviewed unless it is determined to be Frivolous or Vexatious by the Provost and VP Academic.

E: Support for Academic Freedom

1. Lethbridge College will support the expression of Academic Freedom by Academic Staff and Students when they exercise their rights in a manner that is safe and respectful. Examples of ways that the College will support Academic Freedom include, but are not limited to:
 - a. ensuring opportunities to participate in Institutional Governance and other opportunities for internal discussion and input as facilitated through the Lethbridge College Faculty Association, the Lethbridge College Students' Association and other areas.
 - b. ensuring that an effective mechanism for addressing concerns related to Academic Freedom is in place;
 - c. providing opportunities and resources for education and training related to Academic Freedom;
 - d. creating safe spaces for groups and events; and
 - e. encouraging civic engagement, engaging speakers and facilitating discussions.
2. Institutional support to respond to Academic Freedom claims outside the authority of Lethbridge College will be considered by the Provost and VP Academic on a case-by-case basis.

F: Record Keeping

1. All records related to Academic Freedom claims will be held by the Provost and VP Academic's office and will be retained according to the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act and the college's [Records Management Policy](#).