

AD07 Upholding Free Speech

Classification:	Administration
Responsible Authority:	Director, President's Office and Communications
Executive Sponsor:	President
Approval Authority:	Algonquin College Executive Team
Date First Approved:	2019-12-11
Date Last Reviewed:	2024-11-15
Date to Complete Mandatory Review:	2029-11-15

PURPOSE

This free speech policy is designed to ensure freedom of expression, open discussion, and free inquiry at Algonquin College.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees who enter into a working or service relationship with the College. This policy covers all College interactions and business dealings on College premises or off campus.

This policy also applies to the conduct of all full-time and part-time students, which occurs on properties owned or leased by the College, or which is related to College activities or processes, as well as to any location where a student is attending or participating in any College related activity.

Examples of such College related activities include field placements, co-operative education work terms, clinical and field placements, off-campus internships, and community service, College teams travelling to events off-campus, and Students' Association activity off campus or engaged in a club event.

This policy also applies to guests and others who are present at the College.

DEFINITIONS

Word/Term	Definition
Freedom of Expression	The right to speak, write, listen, challenge and learn whereby one can express an opinion without censorship or restraint. It allows individuals to speak freely, share information, and engage in open dialogue.

Hate Speech

The use of extreme language or a form of communication that expresses detestation for or vilifies an individual or group of individuals based on colour, ethnicity, place of origin, race, creed, gender, or sexual orientation, among other grounds of discrimination under Ontario's Human Rights Code. Hatred is often rooted in anti-Black, anti-Asian and anti-Indigenous racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, antisemitism, Islamophobia and white supremacy.

Source: Ontario Human Rights Commission

POLICY

1. "The objects (mandate) of the colleges are to offer a comprehensive program of career-oriented, post-secondary education and training to assist individuals in finding and keeping employment, to meet the needs of employers and the changing work environment and to support the economic and social development of their local and diverse communities" ([Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002](#)).
2. Freedom of expression must be protected as it is essential to discovery, critical assessment and the effective dissemination of knowledge and ideas and leads to social and economic advancement.
3. Colleges, including Algonquin College, must be places that allow for open discussion and free inquiry where diverse voices can be heard and ideas and viewpoints can be explored and discussed freely and debated openly without fear of reprisal, even if these are considered to be controversial or conflict with the views of some members of the college community. This includes in-person and online or virtual expressions. Although colleges greatly value civility and all members of colleges share responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, it is not the role of colleges to shield members of the college community from ideas and opinions that they may find disagreeable or offensive. It is up to individuals and not colleges to make such judgments for themselves and to debate and challenge ideas that they find unacceptable.
4. Members of the college community are free to criticize and contest the views of others; however, they may not obstruct or interfere with the freedom of others to express their views. The rights of others to express or hear ideas must also be respected. Colleges may reasonably regulate the time, place and manner of freedom of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt normal college operations and ordinary college activities or endanger the safety of others.
5. Speech that violates the law, including the Ontario Human Rights Code, is not allowed. Speech that constitutes harassment, a threat or hate speech is not

allowed. Other context-specific boundaries to freedom of expression may also apply, such as those arising out of the terms of employment and collective agreements.

6. This policy statement is aligned with other college policies, and is designed to be consistent with other existing college policies. For Employees, those policies include [RE07: Academic Freedom Rights and Responsibilities](#) and [HR18: Employee Code of Conduct](#); for students, this policy aligns with the College's policy on [SA07: Student Conduct](#).
7. Existing college mechanisms and processes will be used to handle complaints and ensure compliance with the policy. Complaints that remain unresolved may be referred to the Ontario Ombudsman. Existing disciplinary measures will apply to those whose actions are contrary to the policy.
8. Colleges, including Algonquin College, will consider official student groups' compliance with the policy as a condition for ongoing financial support or recognition, and encourage student groups to adopt policies that align with this policy.

PROCEDURE

Existing college mechanisms and processes will be used to handle complaints. For employees, the process for addressing a violation of a College policy is covered in detail in the Employee Code of Conduct. Student misconduct procedures are covered in policy [SA07: Student Conduct](#).

RELATED POLICIES

AD18: Social Media Account Management
 HR18: Employee Code of Conduct
 RE07: Academic Freedom Rights and Responsibilities
 SA03: Student Complaints
 SA07: Student Conduct

RELATED MATERIALS

[Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002](#)
[Criminal Code \(R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46\)](#)
[Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario - Ontario Campus Free Speech Policy](#)