

McMaster University Summary of Policy Framework: Freedom of Expression

Definition

McMaster University defines freedom of speech as the right of all members of our community to exercise freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression.

Principles

As an academic institution McMaster upholds a fundamental commitment to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Throughout the history of our University, we have advanced the boundaries of knowledge and learning through critical enquiry, discussion and debate, and this freedom to question, research and explore is fundamental to the discovery, communication and preservation of knowledge that is at the heart of our mission.

McMaster supports the rights and freedoms of all members of our community, and invited speakers and guests, to exchange ideas, question and challenge received wisdom, engage in respectful and informed discussion and debate, discuss even the most potentially controversial issues, and participate in peaceful protest and dissent.

McMaster also recognizes the imbalances in power that exist within our community and the disproportionate impact such imbalances have upon marginalized groups and individuals. All members of the University community are required to respect the rights and freedoms of others and engage with one another in a spirit of mutual respect, understanding and regard for human dignity.

Limitations

In exercising freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, as well as the freedom to engage in peaceful protest and dissent, members of the McMaster community, and invited speakers and guests, must not infringe the rights and freedoms of others.

Comment or conduct that constitutes harassment or discrimination, or promotes or incites violence or hate, is not acceptable.

Relationship with Student Leaders

The University administration works closely and collaboratively with the leaders of McMaster's autonomous Affiliated Student Unions/Associations, and has policies in place governing the process for recognition and support of student groups, including clubs, academic societies and approved sub-groups.

Resolution Mechanisms

The University has complaint mechanisms and support services in place to address any issues or concerns with behaviour that may violate University policies or codes of conduct. The Ontario Ombudsman and the Human Rights Commission can be contacted regarding any complaints that remain unresolved.

Further Information

McMaster's [Freedom of Expression website](#) draws together the relevant policies and statements on this issue and provides further context and information.

December, 2018