



POLICY

Policy Name	ACADEMIC FREEDOM			<i>Revised</i>
Policy Number	GS 4.0	Category	Knowledge Governance & Stewardship	
Policy Authority	Vice-President, Academic and Provost	Approval	May 20, 2026	
Executive Sponsor	Vice-President, Academic and Provost	Next Review	May 20, 2031	
Approved By	President and CEO	Frequency of Review	Every 5 years	

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Medicine Hat College (MHC) promotes and protects a teaching, learning, and research environment that encourages academic freedom. Unlike the broader concept of freedom of expression, academic freedom is based on institutional integrity, rigorous standards for enquiry, and institutional autonomy, which allow MHC to set its research and educational priorities.

Faculty and students have the right to engage in independent thinking and expression, to pursue avenues of enquiry, and to engage in full and unrestricted consideration of any idea. This right carries with it the duty and responsibility to use that freedom in a way that is consistent with the educational and scholarly pursuit for truth, knowledge, and understanding.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to members of the college community engaged in teaching, research, scholarship, and learning and their right to academic freedom.

While academic freedom is central to the college and to academia at large, it does not imply rights greater than those granted by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the laws of Canada. It also does not negate any obligations, entitlements, or responsibilities individuals may have as members of a professional association, through licensure, or under the college's Code of Conduct policy.

This policy does not protect:

- (a) any publication or display that is likely to expose a person or class of persons to hatred or contempt based on the protected grounds outlined in the Alberta Human Rights Act;
- (b) any publication or display that includes potentially defamatory material;
- (c) any publication or display that includes illicit material, except in instances where such material is being used for bona fide teaching or research purposes;
- (d) any intentional public divulgement of privileged college information; or
- (e) the publication or presentation of scholarly activities that are evidenced to have been conducted in a manner inconsistent with the principles of research ethics, academic rigour, and academic integrity.

3. DEFINITIONS

- **Academic Freedom:** includes:

- (a) The freedom to engage in teaching, learning, research, and other creative works and to disseminate ideas and research results without institutional reprisal, within the limits of MHC's policies and procedures.

- (b) The freedom to engage in discourse in the learning environment and to discuss topics that are pertinent to the students' achievement of the educational goals of the course or program, within the limits of acceptable learning environment conduct.
- **College Community:** includes, but is not limited to the following:
 - (a) Community Member: any person working in collaboration with MHC for a business or an academic purpose.
 - (b) Contractor: an individual, company, supplier, or service provider (and its employees) who provides services to MHC (with or without a service contract).
 - (c) Employee: any person who is employed by MHC or who provides services to MHC under an employment contract.
 - (d) Student: any person enrolled in study at MHC.
 - (e) Volunteer: any person performing work in an unpaid capacity.

4. PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 Post-secondary educational institutions serve the common good of a democratic society through searching for and disseminating knowledge, truth, and understanding as well as fostering independent thinking and expression. These ends cannot be achieved without academic freedom.
- 4.2 No freedom is absolute, and no right is unlimited, and therefore those who claim the right to academic freedom also accept the responsibility of being open minded, respectful, and honest.
- 4.3 The college has the responsibility to foster and defend intellectual honesty, freedom of enquiry, and free expression of ideas, ensuring academic freedom is maintained within the institution.
- 4.4 MHC respects and promotes open and respectful debate about its governance and practices and encourages participation in institutional governance and other internal discussions.
- 4.5 MHC supports the right to examine, question, research, teach, and learn in an environment that supports the need to investigate, speculate, and comment without penalty, sanction, institutional censorship, or reprisal.
- 4.6 Researchers are entitled to freedom in research and in the publication of the results.
- 4.7 The rights of faculty and students to exercise their academic freedom do not vary according to the medium or place in which they are exercised. These rights are as essential to academic activities undertaken electronically as those undertaken in speech, writing, creative works, and/or other media.
- 4.8 Teaching and academic enquiry often involves controversial matters. Faculty and other college employees are free to conduct frank discussions, research, and other forms of enquiry about them.

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Kevin Shufflebotham
President and CEO
Date: May 20, 2026

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Nancy Brown
Vice-President, Academic and Provost
Date: May 20, 2026

Additional Information	Location
GS 4.1 Academic Freedom Responsibilities & Infringement Procedure	MHC Website/Policy and Procedure SharePoint
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms	Publications.gc.ca
MHC Freedom of Expression Statement	MHC Website
MHC Faculty Association Collective Agreement	MHC Website
Post-Secondary Learning Act	Alberta.ca