



Academic Freedom

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Policy Statement

Institutions of higher learning serve the common good of society and are dedicated to the pursuit and dissemination of truth, knowledge, and understanding through fostering independent thinking and expression. These ends cannot be achieved without academic freedom.

Academic freedom includes the right of all members of the BCIT community to inquire, discuss, and express themselves, study, conduct research, teach, publish, create and exhibit their work, associate, and peaceably assemble without deference to prescribed doctrine on ideas, principles, concepts, or issues related to pedagogy and research.

BCIT believes that the exchange of knowledge and ideas in an environment of academic freedom is an indispensable foundation of quality education, research, and scholarship. Academic freedom extends to the entire BCIT community.

Purpose of Policy

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Define academic freedom
- Describe the commitment of BCIT to uphold the principles of academic freedom and responsibility
- Establish the duties and responsibilities of BCIT community members in upholding the principles of academic freedom

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Application of this Policy

This policy applies to all members of the BCIT community including, but not limited to, Board members, administrators, faculty members (including guest lecturers and speakers), staff members, and students.

Related Documents and Legislation

BCIT:

- BCGEU Support Staff Collective Agreement
- BCGEU Vocational Instructors Collective Agreement
- BCIT FSA Collective Agreement
- BCIT Research Ethics Board (REB) Guidelines
- Policy 1504, Standards of Conduct
- Policy 5100 Glossary of Educational Policy Terms
- Policy 5102, Student Code of Conduct (Non-academic)
- Policy 5104, Academic Integrity and Appeals
- Policy 5601 Faculty Qualifications
- Policy 6400, Authored Books
- Policy 6500, Research Ethics for Human Participants
- Policy 6600, Integrity in Research
- Policy 7507, Harassment and Discrimination

BC Ministry of Advanced Education:

- BC Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) Exempt Status Criteria and Guidelines

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Tri-Council Policy Statement:

- Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, December 2010

Academic Freedoms

Academic freedom includes, but is not limited to:

A. Freedom to Teach

A member of the BCIT community has:

- The entitlement to freedom in the classroom in discussing the curriculum
- The right to introduce any topic or viewpoint related to the curriculum or to the education of students in the subject
- The individual right and responsibility to determine course content and textbooks subject to BCIT policy
- The right and responsibility to present subject matter, regardless of how controversial, in such a way as to encourage free discussion, inquiry and expression

B. Freedom to Learn and Conduct Research

A member of the BCIT community has the right to full freedom in the pursuit of knowledge through research interests and in the publication of the results, subject only to the satisfactory performance of other academic duties.

C. Freedom to Engage in Professional Service and Outreach

All members of the BCIT community have the freedom to pursue and participate in internal and external Institutional and professional service and outreach. Institutional service includes administrative duties, committee work, and student advising. Professional service refers to work done in support of one's academic discipline, and involves such activities as serving on committees and boards of professional organizations, organizing or chairing sessions at national or international meetings, editing or reading manuscripts for professional journals, or participating in on-site program evaluations.

D. Freedom to Act as a Private Citizen

All members of the BCIT community are private citizens, and are entitled to speak or write as private citizens without Institutional censorship or discipline. However, they should make every reasonable effort to ensure that when they are expressing personal views, they are not seen as spokespersons or representatives of BCIT.

E. Freedom to Read

BCIT employees responsible for the development of written, visual, and machine readable resources for the academic community have the right to select materials on the basis of their value as information and entertainment sources, being careful to present a diversity of opinion. No library materials may be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval. In no case may materials be excluded because of the sexual orientation, gender, age, family status, race, heritage, or nationality or the social, political, or religious views of the author.

Rights and Responsibilities

Academic freedom confers the following rights with their attendant responsibilities:

A. Instruction

Faculty have the right to teach and disseminate academic and course related material without fear of censure. They are free to fulfill their professional obligations to determine course content and appropriate method of delivery, subject to the course outlines and accrediting or licensing-body requirements.

B. Curriculum Development and Instructional Design

Members of the BCIT community have the right to participate in decision-making related to changes in curriculum, developments in instructional design and delivery, and the establishment of new programs.

C. Research, Scholarship, and other Scholarly Activity

Members of the BCIT community are free to select research topics, to establish experimental designs, to collect and analyze data, and to publish the results without censure or inappropriate influence on the part of the Institute. This freedom does not obviate faculty from performing assigned duties, but is subject to the terms of Academic Responsibility and Academic Integrity, and within the guidelines established by the BCIT Research Ethics Board (REB) in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

D. Governance

Members of the BCIT community have the right to participate in the governance of the

Institute, by occupying elected positions on bodies such as Education Council or the Board of Governors. They are free to offer advice and criticism on matters of policy and strategic directions of the Institute.

E. Professional and Community Activities

Members of the BCIT community have the right to personal and professional opinions and to convey such opinions regardless of popular sentiments to the contrary, provided that they do not represent those opinions as those of the Institute, unless expressly authorized to do so. Members are free to affiliate with professional and civic associations in fulfillment of their professional and civic aspirations and interests.

Duties and Responsibilities

BCIT Community

All members of the BCIT community are expected to support and protect the fundamental principle of academic freedom and contribute to an environment of tolerance and mutual respect through the use of respectful communication that values both dignity of others and difference of opinion.

Academic freedom does not obviate the responsibility to respect BCIT policies, local and federal laws, or human rights and freedoms. Hence, academic freedom does not entitle anyone to promote hatred or contempt for any social, national, or ethnic group, to display incompetence in teaching or scholarship, or to violate the rights of others.

Members of the BCIT community are also responsible to:

- Seek and state the truth as understood
- Foster and defend intellectual honesty, freedom of inquiry and instruction
- Respect those with differing views
- Work collectively to foster the education of learners
- Acknowledge when personal views and opinions may differ from those of the institution

BCIT will investigate and respond appropriately to any breaches of this policy.

BCIT may at any time revise or create new policies and procedures to support the principles of academic freedom.

Procedures Associated With This Policy

None.

Forms Associated With This Policy

None.

Special Situations

None.

Amendment History

1. Created 2014 Nov 25

Scheduled Review Date

2017 Nov 25