

AC.2.18	
ACADEMIC FREEDOM	
Section:	Academic/Student (AC)
Subject:	Programs and Curriculum
Legislation:	
Effective:	November 17, 2015
Revision:	September 1, 2016 (reformatted); December 13, 2019

APPROVED: _____
Chair, on Behalf of SAIT’s Board of Governors

POLICY

The policy of the Board of Governors is to ensure that SAIT protects and promotes freedom of expression, and to recognize that academic freedom is essential to SAIT’s academic activities.

PHILOSOPHY

SAIT is committed to the highest academic standards. Freedom of expression and academic freedom are fundamental to the realization of SAIT’s commitment to these standards of excellence, and to SAIT’s achievement of its vision and mission.

SAIT recognizes that:

1. Freedom of expression and academic freedom create and maintain opportunities for critical thought. SAIT is a place of free and open inquiry in all matters, and all members of the SAIT community are guaranteed the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge and learn.
2. SAIT does not attempt to shield members of its community from ideas or opinions with which they may disagree or which they may find controversial or offensive. Debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forward are thought by some, or even most, to be offensive, unwise, immoral or wrong-headed. It is for individuals, not SAIT, to make those judgments for themselves and to act not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas they oppose.

The official controlled version of this document is held in the Board of Governors Office.



3. Mutual respect and civility are valued, but do not constitute sufficient justification to limit free speech.
4. Freedom of expression and academic freedom are not absolute rights, but are subject to the constraints and responsibilities set out in this policy.

DEFINITIONS

Academic activities

Teaching, program and course development, program and course delivery, learning, scholarly activity and applied research, academic administration and governance, and academic advising.

Academic freedom

Academic freedom includes:

- a) The freedom to teach and, where feasible and applicable, to conduct scholarly activity and applied research as appropriate to one's discipline and to publish the results of this activity and research, within the limits of SAIT's policies and procedures.
- b) The freedom to engage in discourse in the classroom and to discuss topics that are pertinent to the students' achievement of the learning outcomes of the course being taught as documented in the course outline, within the limits of acceptable classroom conduct.
- c) The freedom to express ideas that challenge or question tradition, conventional thought and/or ideologies.

Freedom of expression

The right to speak, write, listen, challenge and learn.

SAIT campus

SAIT's main campus and all satellite campuses.

SAIT community

SAIT's governors, employees, students, contractors, consultants, agents, and volunteers.

Scholarly activity

Scholarly activity in the polytechnic context is any activity that involves the intentional creation, integration and/or dissemination of knowledge with a view to informing

The official controlled version of this document is held in the Board of Governors Office.

professional practice, contributing to the state-of-practice within a field and/or impacting the broader external environment. Applied research is one form of scholarly activity at SAIT.

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

1. This policy applies to all members of the SAIT community.
2. Freedom of expression and academic freedom are subject to the following constraints and responsibilities:
 - a) Academic freedom carries with it the responsibility to use that freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to carry out academic activities on the basis of an honest search for knowledge, and in accordance with SAIT's policies, procedures and ethical guidelines.
 - b) All members of the SAIT community have an obligation to use their freedom of expression and academic freedom in a responsible manner. This means that members of the SAIT community have the right to criticize and question other views expressed on the SAIT campus, but cannot obstruct or interfere with other members' freedom of expression or academic freedom, Members of the SAIT community also cannot engage in any action that demeans the freedom or dignity of other members of the SAIT community.
 - c) Freedom of speech and academic freedom will be restricted where they:
 - Violate municipal, provincial or federal law.
 - Falsely defame an individual or constitute a genuine threat or harassment that unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality of interests.
 - Violate SAIT's policies and procedures, including but not limited to those relating to a respectful working and learning environment, social media use, third party advertising, the prevention of violence, the student code of conduct, and the use of SAIT's facilities for non-academic purposes.
 - Breach the terms of SAIT's employment and collective agreements.
 - Are incompatible with or disrupt SAIT's functioning as a polytechnic institution, and/or endanger the safety of others.

The official controlled version of this document is held in the Board of Governors Office.

3. Members of the SAIT community are free to act and speak in their capacity as public citizens without institutional censorship and/or reprisal, subject to the constraints and responsibilities inherent in freedom of expression and academic freedom set out in this policy. They must, however, avoid creating the impression that they speak for SAIT, unless SAIT has expressly delegated them that responsibility.
4. Faculty members have the right to participate in the selection of course materials, course content and course methodology. Faculty members have an associated responsibility to deliver their courses in a manner consistent with the course outlines established by the program responsible for delivering that course, and in accordance with the expectations established through the performance planning review process and as set out in this policy.
5. All members of the SAIT community have the freedom to pursue and participate in internal and external institutional and professional service, subject to the obligations or duties inherent in their roles and positions at SAIT. Professional service refers to work done in support of one's academic discipline and includes but is not limited to activities such as serving on committees and boards of professional organizations, organizing or chairing sessions at national or international meetings, or editing or reading manuscripts for professional journals.
6. Freedom of expression and academic freedom do not relieve members of the SAIT community from their obligations or duties inherent in their roles at SAIT.
7. Freedom of expression and academic freedom do not imply rights greater than those granted by applicable laws and regulations.
8. SAIT is not accountable for infringements of freedom of expression or academic freedom originating beyond SAIT's control, including but not limited to legislation. SAIT is also not accountable for infringements of freedom of expression or academic freedom by members of the SAIT community that occur without SAIT's knowledge and express or implied concurrence.

PROCEDURE

1. Members of the SAIT community who believe that their freedom of expression or academic freedom has been infringed may apply to the vice president, academic, who shall establish an ad hoc committee to resolve the issue. This committee shall be comprised of one member appointed by the SAIT Academic Faculty Association, one member appointed by the vice president, academic, and with those two members to

The official controlled version of this document is held in the Board of Governors Office.



decide on a third member from within the SAIT community. The committee chair shall be selected from among the three members. The committee's decision shall be delivered by the chair in writing to the vice president, academic. The vice president, academic shall communicate the decision to all affected parties. The committee's decision is final and binding.

2. Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action under procedure [AC.3.4.1 Student Code of Conduct](#), in the case of students, or under procedure [HR.4.4.1 Corrective Action Procedures](#) or applicable contracts, in the case of other members of the SAIT community.

POLICY

The official controlled version of this document is held in the Board of Governors Office.