



August 29, 2019

## **OCAD University Freedom of Expression Annual Report 2019**

OCAD University (OCAD U) adopted a [freedom of expression statement and policies](#), effective January 1, 2019. The free speech policy framework draws from a number of policies and agreements in place at OCAD U that outline the University's commitment to freedom of expression and the expectations of the University's community members and guests when exercising this freedom. The following is the University's annual report on the progress of the implementation of our policy from January to August 2019.

### **Institutional Culture and Policies**

OCAD U is committed to open discussion, intellectual inquiry and creative expression, and supports a work and learning environment that values mutual respect, diversity and inclusion in the exchange of ideas and opinion. Restrictions on freedom of expression can only be justified if they constitute a limit that is reasonable in a free and democratic society. The University is concerned with expression that causes discrimination or other harmful effects.

Since implementation of OCAD U's policy, there has been ongoing dialogue within the University community concerning freedom of expression on campus. Most recently, in May 2019, the University updated its Respectful Work and Learning Environment Policy (RWLEP) to ensure the RWLEP aligns with the policy.

OCAD U employs a decentralized process for reporting any free speech-related complaints. There are several University policies that govern freedom of expression and academic freedom on campus, including the RWLEP, Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and the Memorandum of Agreement ("MOA") between the University and the OCAD U Faculty Association.

No issues have arisen during the period of implementation that would cause the University to re-evaluate or amend our existing free speech policy in the near term. OCAD U will continue to monitor the implementation of our policy and will make appropriate adjustments as and when needed.

## **Events**

Since January 1, 2019, OCAD U held approximately 270 non-curricular events on campus.

The University provides multiple channels for community members or guests to raise questions or concerns regarding the violation of a University policy or code of conduct in relation to free speech. Offices that may be contacted to respond to an enquiry include the Office of Human Resources, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Sustainability Initiatives, or the Office of the Vice-Provost Students & International. A complaint against the University itself may be directed to the Office of the President.

After thorough polling, the University is unaware of any free speech-related cost and/or safety concerns related to any of its non-curricular events held during the implementation period.

## **Complaints**

OCAD U has a rich tradition of hosting public events to foster knowledge exchange and art and design education through exhibits, workshops, forums, talks and performances, to name a few. To our knowledge, no official complaints about free speech on campus were received from members of the University community or guests in relation to any non-curricular events held on campus during the implementation period.

Freedom of expression is essential to the advancement of learning and the dissemination of knowledge. The exercise of free expression in the context of teaching and learning within a university may produce controversy, disputes and profound disagreement. The University is unaware of any official complaints made regarding free speech on campus from members of the University community or guests in relation to a curricular event or incident during the implementation period.

To our knowledge, there were no incidents where the free speech policy was not followed appropriately or where free speech-related concerns were forwarded to the Ontario Ombudsman.