

Policy Name:
Originating/Responsible Department:
Approval Authority:
Date of Original Policy:
Last Updated:
Mandatory Revision Date:
Contact:

Institutional Impartiality
President and Vice-Chancellor
Board of Governors
October 2025
October 2025
October 2030
General Counsel

Policy Statement:

Carleton University seeks to foster an environment where diverse perspectives can be explored, debated and challenged without institutional endorsement of any political or partisan position.

Purpose:

This Policy affirms Carleton University's resolute commitment to, and defence of, its fundamental purpose and core values, while maintaining institutional impartiality on specific matters about which individuals and groups may engage in free inquiry, disseminate and challenge knowledge, and hold different views as they exercise their academic freedom and right to free expression within the confines of University policies and the law.

Institutional impartiality, however, is not the same as institutional neutrality. The University is not neutral when it comes to upholding particular values, principles, Codes, and laws that are fundamental to sustaining its core purpose and mission within a conducive environment. The University and its constituent members have an obligation to ensure that the exercise of their academic and expressive freedoms does not compromise the values that enable the University to support the kind of community necessary to deliver on its purpose, as laid out in Section 3 of the Carleton University Act. In order to advance this purpose, there is a collective obligation to foster an environment of collegial engagement, dialogue, and critique, even on the most challenging and controversial issues, which also sustains the University's values of personal and group safety; equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging; mutual care, respect, and flourishing; academic freedom with respect to intellectual inquiry, perspectives, and knowledge dissemination.

Scope:

This policy applies to all faculty and staff of academic and administrative units, including Deans and Chairs as well as university leadership such as the President and Vice-Chancellor, Vice-President or anyone acting on behalf of the University or where those employees may reasonably be seen to be acting on behalf of the University. This Policy governs official communications and representations to ensure alignment with the principles of institutional impartiality.

Procedure:

The *Carleton University Act* sets out the objects and purposes of the University, which include the advancement of learning, the dissemination of knowledge, and the betterment of its community. To achieve this, the University is committed to fostering an environment of open inquiry, rigorous debate and the free exchange of ideas, while maintaining a stance of institutional impartiality.

Institutional impartiality, for the purposes of this Policy, means that the University does not endorse political parties or candidates, or take positions in matters of public debates that are not directly connected to its institutional mission. While faculty, staff and students are entitled to engage in partisan political activities and encouraged to engage in civic life and express their views as individuals, the University as an institution will not take a position on matters of public, political or academic debate that are not directly related to its mission and purpose.

The University will not interfere in the legitimate exercise of academic freedom and freedom of expression, in accordance with University policies and the law. However, individual and group expression that, without appropriate authority, purports to represent the views of the University or that may be reasonably seen to be the views of the University, is not permitted. This includes the use of University-owned or managed communication assets, such as URLs, websites, social media and other official communication channels for partisan or political purposes or in violation of the Brand Identity Policy. It is also not permitted to make partisan statements ostensibly on behalf of the entirety of the University, a Faculty, Department, or student body with respect to matters of public, political or academic debate. This does not preclude individual students, faculty members, or staff from making such statements on their own behalf, subject to University policy and the law.

In accordance with the [Freedom of Speech Policy](#), there are limits to freedom of expression in Canada. The University will not remain neutral with respect to, and will not tolerate, expression or behaviour that violates the *Criminal Code* of Canada or that results in discrimination as defined by the Ontario *Human Rights Code*.

By upholding institutional impartiality, the University ensures that it remains a place where ideas can be freely and vigorously examined, and rigorous debate is supported.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Academic and Administrative unit heads or leaders should operate under the default assumption that their expressions, when conveyed through unit websites, newsletters, and unit or University sponsored events, are likely to be interpreted as official communications of Carleton University. If holders of such institutional positions wish to speak in their individual capacity, they must make that explicitly clear and not use their official titles or letterheads, university branded websites, newsletters or events to impart those views in ways that may reasonably be seen as reflecting their leadership role.

Contacts:

General Counsel

Chief Communications Officer and Associate Vice-President (Communications and Public Affairs)

Links to related Policies:

Freedom of Speech Policy

Brand Identity Policy

Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy

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