

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

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

Policy Statement:

Carleton University affirms its commitment to fostering an environment where diverse perspectives can be explored, debated and challenged without institutional endorsement of any political or partisan position. Institutional Impartiality does not mean disengagement. Carleton remains vigorously committed to upholding academic freedom, respect for human rights, and to ensuring a safe, lawful environment that supports open intellectual exchange.

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 its core mission, particular values and principles, as articulated in the University's strategic plans, policies and institutional commitments, 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:

- The President, Vice-Presidents, Deans, Chairs and Directors, and all employees when acting in an official capacity; and
- Institutional statements, public communications, or representations made on behalf of Carleton University or any of its constituent academic or administrative units.

This policy does not restrict:

- the academic freedom of faculty, librarians and Contract Instructors, as defined in their collective agreements;
- the ability for faculty members, librarians and Contract Instructors to speak, research, teach, present and write about topics of their choosing and within their areas of expertise;
- the right of faculty members, librarians and Contract Instructors, or academic or administrative units, to host events or invite speakers to present on topics within their departments' academic remit;
- the rights of faculty members, librarians and Contract Instructors to participate in civic and political life, subject to any applicable legal requirements; or
- the University's obligations to act or speak when its operations, governance, or legal responsibilities are directly affected.

This policy does not apply to students, student associations, student clubs, or student societies.

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, librarians, staff and students are entitled to engage in partisan political activities and are encouraged to engage in civic life and express their views as individuals or as voluntary collectives of individuals acting in their own capacity, 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. To that end, this Policy does not place restrictions on the freedom of faculty members, librarians and Contract Instructors to research, teach or speak about any matters within their areas of expertise, even where those are controversial or part of ongoing public debate. Further, faculty members and librarians are not restricted from indicating their affiliation with the University, including their home department and rank, when engaging in these activities. However, individual and group expression that, without appropriate authority, purports to represent the views of the University or its constituent academic and administrative units, is not permitted.

It is also not permitted to make statements ostensibly on behalf of the entirety of the University or its constituent academic or administrative units with respect to matters of public, political or academic debate. This does not preclude members of these units from making such statements on their own behalf, either individually or in concert with others, subject to University policy and the law.

Limits on Expression:

Nothing in this policy authorizes or protects:

- Hate speech, incitement to violence, or threats prohibited by law;
- Discrimination or harassment as defined in University policies and procedures or the Ontario *Human Rights Code*.
- Use of University resources, including communications assets (e.g., websites, URLs), or identity to imply institutional endorsement of a political party, candidate, social or partisan cause;
- Conduct that undermines the lawful, respectful, and inclusive environment essential to the University's mission;
- Conduct that is inconsistent with or violates the University's health and safety obligations.

Criteria for Institutional Expression:

The University, acting on behalf of its constituent academic and administrative units, may only issue institutional statements when doing so aligns with protecting and advancing its core mission. To that end, the University may issue statements in defence of academic freedom; on matters pertaining to its core mission of teaching, learning, research and scholarship; and risks to the safety and well-being of the University community.

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 University administrative 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 to impart those views in ways that may reasonably be seen as reflecting their leadership role.

Complaints:

Any member of the University community may submit a complaint under this Policy. The Intake Office to receive the complaint is:

The Director, Labour Relations (Academic), Office of the Deputy Provost (or designate) for academic employees;

The Director, Staff and Labour Relations (Professional Services), Human Resources (or designate) for professional services employees.

After receiving a complaint, the University will determine whether there are sufficient grounds to conduct an investigation. Any investigation will be conducted in a fair, impartial, and timely manner in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness. Anyone found to have violated this Policy may be subject to discipline.

Contacts:

General Counsel

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

Links to related Policies:

[Freedom of Speech Policy](#)

[Human Rights Policy](#)

[Brand Identity Policy](#)