A. Background and Definitions

Niagara College functions within an academic community that aspires to the goal of mutual respect, and to providing an environment that is free of discrimination and harassment.

Scholarship: The pursuit, creation and dissemination of knowledge through study and research is an integral and essential element of Niagara College.

B. Purpose

This policy defines the rights, obligations and responsibilities related to Academic Freedom when applied to teaching and scholarship conducted by College staff members in the course of their appointment.

C. Policy Statements

1. Niagara College recognizes the rights and privileges of faculty, staff and students to undertake research, to perform teaching and learning activities, to explore and produce creative work, to engage in community services, and to hold academic discussion, within the parameters established by the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act (2002), Niagara College policies and procedures, ethical guidelines, and all applicable legislation.

2. To this end, Niagara College affirms the rights of faculty and staff to discuss aspects of topics pertinent to the achievement of the learning outcomes of the course being taught as documented in the course outline, which will include diverse opinions in order to gain a well-rounded understanding of an issue, and taking place within Niagara College’s academic community. Niagara College affirms the rights of faculty to research, enquire about, investigate without restriction, pursue controversial issues and speak freely about scholarly issues without fear of impairment to position or other reprisal.

3. Niagara College further affirms that faculty and staff are free to act and speak in their capacity as public citizens, provided they indicate they are speaking as individuals and not acting as representatives of Niagara College. As professionals and representatives of their discipline or field of study, faculty and staff have a responsibility to be honest, accurate and respectful in their statements and activities. The freedom to express ideas carries with it, an attendant responsibility and accountability.
Niagara College requires that its members exercise academic freedom responsibly. Academic freedom does not relieve any member of the academic community from their obligations or duties inherent in the roles associated with the teaching and learning process and with program learning outcomes, or the Ontario Human Rights Code and legislation and the Criminal Code of Canada.

Academic Freedom also has corresponding responsibilities which include a high degree of respect for evidence; integrity in the research in accordance with the conventions of the discipline; impartial reasoning; and honesty in reporting both the underlying assumptions and the results of the scholarship.

Concerns regarding this Academic Freedom policy will be addressed using a discussion forum or mediation process and, if necessary, legal or formal action.

D. Related Documents

Policies:  NC600 Ownership of Intellectual Property
          NC800 Student Rights & Responsibilities
          NC900 Research Involving Human Participants