

What CAUT has to say

CAUT policies are not binding on member associations (the MRFA is a member of CAUT) or their institutions. However, these policies are approved by CAUT Council and are used by CAUT to inform its ongoing work.

About Academic freedom

Academic freedom does not require neutrality on the part of the individual. Academic freedom makes intellectual discourse, critique, and commitment possible. **All academic staff must have the right to fulfil their functions without reprisal or repression by the institution, the state, or any other source.**

More information at

<https://www.caut.ca/about-us/caut-policy/lists/caut-policy-statements/policy-statement-on-academic-freedom>

Conflict of interest for Academic Staff

A conflict of interest is generally understood to be a circumstance or a set of circumstances that creates a risk that professional judgement or actions regarding a primary interest will be unduly influenced by a secondary interest.

In addition to the conflict-of-interest policies required by granting or accreditation agencies, **universities and colleges should have clear guidelines to manage conflicts of interest fairly, appropriately, and consistently.** Such guidelines **should define clearly what a conflict of interest is, and the appropriately scaled remedy,** while at all times protecting the rights of academic staff to participate fully in collegial processes. Such guidelines should explicitly recognize academic integrity and institutional autonomy as essential to individuals and institutions which serve the public good and must be seen to repay public trust in their independence and expertise.

2.0

Conflicts of interest involving personal material gain for an individual or for those with whom they have close ties should be managed by disclosure of the conflict and appropriate divestment or sequestering of such material interests according to the regulations established by the applicable administrative bodies.

More information at

<https://www.caut.ca/about-us/caut-policy/lists/caut-policy-statements/policy-statement-on-conflict-of-interest---governing-boards>

Freedom from Harassment

The Canadian Association of University Teachers is committed to promoting a workplace that is free from harassment. Harassment undermines the capacity of individuals to participate equally and fully in the academic community.

Harassment is any vexatious behaviour in the form of repeated and hostile or unwanted conduct, verbal comments, actions or gestures, that affects a person's dignity or

psychological or physical integrity and that results in a harmful work environment. A single serious incident of such behaviour could also be deemed to be harassment if it has a harmful effect.

All members of the academic community have a duty not to harass or behave in a manner that produces, contributes to or perpetuates a learning or work culture that tolerates harassment.

More information at

<https://www.caut.ca/about-us/caut-policy/lists/caut-policy-statements/policy-statement-on-freedom-from-harassment>

Professional Rights and Responsibilities

1.2

Academic staff members have the right to assess and evaluate student performance, to organize course content and classroom or laboratory activities, and to employ methodology and didactic material, including textbooks, in a manner consistent with relevant academic standards and the course description approved by the senior academic body of the institution, provided that these policies and course descriptions do not infringe the individual's academic freedom. In multi-section courses, or in team teaching, the same principles apply.

1.3

Where appropriate, academic staff members should encourage students to debate and discuss course content. Academic staff have the right to promote and guide student participation in class discussions as they see fit within the framework of human rights and professional standards

1.4

They should be fair in evaluating their students.

1.5

They should not exploit the work of students for personal gain.

1.6

All information about students that is gained in confidence, whether concerning students' academic progress, personal lives or political and religious views, should be kept in strict confidence. This does not affect the normal use within an institution of information concerning academic progress for the purpose of making academic decisions.

1.7

Where an academic staff member and a student are in a close personal relationship such that there is, or may be perceived to be, a conflict of interest, or inappropriate bias, the staff member should decline or terminate a supervisory or evaluative role with respect to the student in question, and, when necessary, make appropriate alternative arrangements for the supervision and/or evaluation of that student's work.

1.8

When acting as referees, academic staff members should strive to be fair and impartial. They may refer to a student's character where this is relevant.

In cases where the reference has not been solicited by the student, academic staff members should inform the student prior to responding. Normally they should not respond unless the student agrees.

More information at

<https://www.caut.ca/about-us/caut-policy/lists/caut-policy-statements/policy-statement-on-professional-rights-and-responsibilities->

Trigger Warnings

Classrooms cannot be risk free zones – it is not only a right, but an essential component of academic freedom for instructors to teach

“Trigger” is a psychological term associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and refers to the evocation of serious psychological symptoms by often unpredictable events or environmental conditions related to a previous trauma. It is an individual and unique response that is very difficult, if not impossible, to anticipate or control in the classroom setting.

Triggers should not be confused with discomfort caused by the teaching of provocative and potentially disturbing material, including the repetition and representation of materials related to socio-political events, discrimination, and oppression. **Academic staff should be sensitive to individual students’ responses to potentially disturbing course content. Students should be prepared for potentially disturbing material, while those in need may be directed to appropriate healthcare support.**

More information at

<https://www.caut.ca/about-us/caut-policy/lists/caut-policy-statements/trigger-warnings>