



Community Agreements Policy

Category: Operational Policies

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I. Overview

As part of the long-term goal to transform the MRFA into a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive Association, the MRFA is taking steps to ensure that all MRFA events are free of harassment and discrimination, and addressing the occurrences if and/or when harassment and discrimination take place. The Association is committed to upholding its obligations under the Collective Agreement to maintain a harassment free environment and not tolerate discrimination.

Community Agreements foster a supportive environment for Association members to work, discuss, and decide matters related to the Association business. Once made, Community Agreements will guide the specific Association activity in which they are made (meeting, professional development and/or social event or panel).

II. Principles

- i. Community Agreements are designed to create a safe, respectful and supportive welcoming/inclusive environment within the MRFA.
- ii. The Association is committed to creating an organization that is equitable, inclusive, welcoming, and free from harassment, discrimination and all types of bullying and intimidation. The Association must do its utmost to provide a safe environment for members, staff and elected officers to carry out the Association's work. We recognize that
- iii. Harassing or discriminatory behaviour undermines an individual's right to participate fully and equally in the work of MRFA as well as undermines the purposes and goals of our organization. Neither discrimination nor harassment shall be tolerated at any MRFA event.
- iv. There is no conflict between Community Agreements and Academic Freedom. As noted in Article 23.5 of the Collective Agreement, members must use their academic freedom in a responsible manner and in line with the MRFA standards of professional behaviour.

III. Definitions

Harassment as defined in the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act is defined as a single or repeated incident of objectionable or unwelcome conduct, comment, bullying or action intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group. It is a serious issue and creates an unhealthy work environment resulting in psychological harm to workers. It does not include any reasonable conduct of an employer or supervisor related to the normal management of workers or a work site. Differences of opinion or minor disagreements between coworkers are also not generally considered to be workplace harassment if steps are taken to resolve the conflict.

Discrimination is the act of treating an individual or group differently, unfairly and usually to their detriment, because of their racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

Community Agreements articulate the values that shall guide how members in a particular committee, working group or meeting shall address the work that needs to be accomplished.

IV. Limitations - Related Legislation, Processes, and Governing Documents

- i. Definitions, as provided above, are provided for guidance in Association activities and deliberations. Further reference should be made to applicable legislation and the Collective Agreement, both of which supersede this policy.
- ii. Community Agreements work in conjunction with the rights and obligations outlined in the MRFA Bylaws, and applicable human rights legislation; they do not replace them.

- iii. Issues arising in the University workplace, including meetings of academic units or University committees such as Faculty Councils, General Faculty Council and its Committees, can be dealt with in accordance with the Workplace Environment and Grievance Procedure articles of the Collective Agreement and/or the applicable University policy or relevant provincial legislation.

V. Accountability

- i. As MRFA members, staff, and elected officers, we commit to one another and to the Association to observe and adhere to community agreements once they are developed.
- ii. Although the Chair generally ensures that the Agreements are observed, the committee members ultimately have the responsibility to ensure that the Agreements are upheld.
- iii. If there are recurring problems with respect to an individual not meeting Community Agreements, a complaint may be made via the Association's Complaints Policy.

VI. Procedures

i. Development of Community Agreements for Committees of the Association

- i. Each MRFA Committee shall develop its own principles to create a Community Agreement each academic year through a discussion that outlines how the committee will conduct its business. Sample principles are provided in the appendix.
- ii. Once accepted by the Committee, these Community Agreements shall
 1. be reviewed at the commencement of each meeting,
 2. be posted on the MRFA website along with the Committee's charter, and
- iii. The Chair has a responsibility to review the Agreement before each meeting and to ask whether there is a need to modify it.
- iv. Concerns with the application of Community Agreements may be referred to the Complaints Policy (see also the Meeting Policy for more information).

ii. Application of Community Agreements in Association Events and Meetings of the Membership

- i. Community Agreements shall be included in the agenda for each event and meeting.
- ii. If a member objects to the Agreement in place for a meeting or event, and where the situation may not be expeditiously resolved at the meeting or event, the member may convey their concerns in writing to the Executive Board for consideration and response.
- iii. Refer to the Meeting Policy for more information on the application of Community Agreements in Association Events and Meetings.

Based on CUPE National Code of Conduct 2019

VII. Related Policies

Standards of Professional Conduct, Complaints Policy (in development), and Meetings Policy

Appendix – Sample Community Agreement

Sample principles that may be included in Community Agreements are listed below. While discussing Community Agreements members are encouraged to consider their individual intersectional positionality as they arrive at the principles that are to be contained in the Community Agreements. Community Agreements support difficult conversations and academic discussions by creating a welcoming inclusive space for brave conversations. This is a shared responsibility, which recognizes those who have not been able access our spaces in an equitable way. Sample Principles.

We agree to:

- Recognize and value individual differences.
- Speak from our own experience and not invalidate others' experiences.
- Respect every person's right to withdraw consent to physical, mental, and/or intellectual interactions.
- Approach difficult topics with the aim of mutual understanding (not necessarily agreement).
- Recognize that our intention does not mitigate impact. The statement recognizes that there are some who have been able to speak openly and freely without regard for consequences and that others have not been heard. We aim to create a respectful and inclusive space where people who have not been heard feel invited to speak while inviting those who have spoken to listen and to choose words judiciously and be mindful of their potential impact.