

Freedom of Speech Annual Report (2024)

As indicated in the December 14, 2018 and September 12, 2018 memos from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, each of Ontario's publicly-assisted colleges and universities is to prepare an annual report on the implementation of a free speech policy. Please use this template; you may append additional documents or institution-specific information as you see fit.

The institutional Freedom of Speech Annual Report will be a public document and should respect privacy obligations. Please report on events or incidents that took place between **August 1, 2023** and **July 31, 2024**.

The reports are to be posted on the institution's website and submitted to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) by **September 3, 2024**.

Please submit your institution's annual report and the link to its location on your website to submissions@heqco.ca. Please reach out to HEQCO at the same address with any questions.

Section A: Institutional Policy

You may append additional documentation or institution-specific information as you see fit.

Has your institution amended its free speech policy (or policy framework) since the time of your 2023 report? If so, please explain the reason for the change and provide the link to its location on your institutional website.

There have been no changes made to Policy 8 – Freedom of Speech during the reporting period.

In response to global and campus events, the University augmented its website and public information related to freedom of expression. The information did not amend the University's framework but rather aimed to provide more awareness for the University of Waterloo community.

In May, 2024, the University published online and on signs around campus a list of prohibited activities in relation to protests. These prohibited activities were drawn from and informed by existing University policies and frameworks. The list can be found [here](#).

The University also published online information about assessing the limits to free speech, on a case-by case basis. The information can be found [here](#).

In November 2023, the University launched a Freedom of Expression and Respectful Engagement Task Force to develop principles of freedom of expression for the

University of Waterloo to help ensure we maintain a campus environment for open inquiry and exchange, free expression, and inclusive engagement.

Over a period of six months, the Task Force reviewed the University's existing policies and guidelines related to freedom of expression, examined the current state of freedom of expression across the University, and consulted with the University community.

The Task Force Report was submitted on June 11, 2024. The Report documents 24 general principles to advance and guide the review and development of policies, guidelines, and processes essential to enabling a campus environment that fosters freedom of expression and inclusive engagement. The Report also presents 16 recommendations for the University Community to consider in its ongoing work to uphold freedom of expression and inclusive engagement. The principles and recommendations in the Report provide a suitable guiding framework for work ahead and the University will begin implementation of the report recommendations in Fall 2024.

Where are members of the institutional community (or guests) directed when there is a free-speech-related question or complaint about an institutional event? Please provide contact information.

On the University's Freedom of Expression site, there is a contact form where anyone can submit feedback anonymously. The form can be found [here](#).

The responsible University officer for Policy 8 – Freedom of Speech is the President and Vice-Chancellor. In addition, the Waterloo community is aware of and frequently engages with the University Secretariat on policy interpretation.

The President may be reached at president@uwaterloo.ca or through contact information at this page: [Welcome to the Office of the President | Office of the President \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#)

The Secretariat may be reached at secretariat@uwaterloo.ca or through contact information at this page: [Welcome to the Secretariat | Secretariat \(uwaterloo.ca\)](#)

Inquiries regarding specific events are typically directed to the event organizer. If further information or support is required, they may be referred to relevant offices such as the Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism or University Communications. Additional departments and individuals will be involved as necessary.

What is your institution's policy on holding events where there are security concerns? To your knowledge, were there any instances where a non-curricular event did not proceed due to security concerns or their related costs?

When the University hosts events or speakers which require security, it assumes such costs. When an external party uses University space for an event that requires security, that party is responsible for those costs.

Where safety concerns are identified with a specific event, we engage with our Special Constable Services and our Communications and Issues Management Team to support safety planning and work with event organizers to ensure that events are able to proceed safely. Special Constable Services maintain close liaison with law enforcement authorities.

Our Policy 34 – Health, Safety and Environment prioritizes health and safety at UWaterloo and ensures a secure environment for all. It applies to everyone on University Property or at University Events, except for certain construction projects. The policy aligns with legal frameworks including the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The aim of Policy 34 is to uphold health and safety standards mandated by law, through emphasizing a culture of compliance and accountability, empowering individuals to report hazards or concerns proactively.

There was one instance of a non-curricular event that did not proceed due to safety concerns stemming from a campus protest. A University of Waterloo Board of Governors meeting was scheduled to meet on June 18th, 2024. The meeting was postponed as a result of safety concerns on the advice of Special Constable Services in consultation with law enforcement. The meeting subsequently occurred online.

Section B: Complaints

You may append additional documentation or institution-specific information as you see fit.

Between **August 1, 2023** and **July 31, 2024**, did any member of the institutional community (or guests) make an official complaint about free speech? If yes, please provide a general description that protects the privacy of complainants.

Between August 1, 2023 and July 31, 2024, there were no official complaints about free speech.

If there has been an official complaint (or more than one):

What were the issues under consideration? Please identify any points of contention (e.g., security costs, safety, student unions and/or groups, operational requirements, etc.).

How did the institution manage the free speech complaint(s)? Was the complaint addressed using the procedures set out in the policy? How were issues resolved?

Section C: Summary Data

Please provide the following summary data for free-speech-related official complaints received by the institution:

Number of official complaints received under the free speech policy relating to curricular and non-curricular events.	0
Number of official complaints reviewed that did not proceed.	0
Number of official complaints where the institution determined that the free speech policy was not followed appropriately.	0
Number of official complaints under the free speech policy that resulted in the institution applying disciplinary or other institutional measures.	0
To your knowledge, were any free speech complaints forwarded to the Ontario Ombudsman?	No

To the best of your ability, please provide an estimate of the number of **non-curricular events** held at the institution either online or in person between **August 1, 2023 and July 31, 2024**. Non-curricular events include, for example, invited speakers, sporting events, rallies, student life/student affairs events, conferences, etc., as opposed to regular events held as part of an academic program or course.

The University has events calendars maintained by several departments that allow events to be publicly posted for purposes of bringing events to the attention of community members. Between August 1, 2023 and July 31, 2024, there have been an estimated 1034 advertised non-curricular events listed that the University is aware of that took place on campus or online. Note: Faculties, departments, staff, students, student associations and the public do not list all their events in these calendars. Therefore, it is likely that the number of events was higher than estimated.

Institutional Comments (if any).