

August 29, 2019

Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario

1 Yonge Street, Suite 2402
Toronto, Ontario
M5E 1E5

Dear Dr. Weingarten:

Re: Western University's Annual Report on Freedom of Expression

We thank you for this opportunity to report on the implementation of Western University's Freedom of Expression Policy.

The University's Freedom of Expression Policy and Procedures were developed by an ad hoc Committee of faculty, students and staff of the University. This Committee consulted widely with the University Community, which included four Campus Community Consultation Sessions hosted by members of the Committee and two Town Halls. The University Community was also invited to submit written comments via email to the Committee.

On November 29, 2018, the University's Board of Governors approved the Policy and Procedures after they were approved and recommended unanimously by the University's Senate. This was reported to HEQCO at the end of 2018 and HEQCO was provided with a copies of the Policy and Procedures.

Institutional Culture & Polices

Continuous debate and dialogue on the University's campus with regard to freedom of expression had occurred before and after the Province's requirement for a policy. Freedom of expression has always been and forever will be at the forefront of the University and informs many of the decisions the University makes throughout the year in relation to a variety of events and activities.

Institutional practices have not changed as a result of the policy. The University has been a long supporter of freedom of expression on campus. From controversial speakers to non-violent protests, the University welcomes and has welcomed the free exchange of opinions and ideas as well as the opposition and challenge to those opinions and ideas.

No issues have emerged in the past year which would cause the University to re-evaluate or amend its policy.

Events

The recorded non-curriculum events that took place on campus between January 1st 2019 and August 31, 2019 was approximately 9,715. This number does not include events held in space controlled directly by the faculties (which are not booked through the central reservation system). We estimate that the inclusion of non-curriculum based events held in space controlled directly by facilities would increase the total number of non-curriculum based events by an additional 30% to 40%.

The University's Ombudsperson is available for any individual considering a complaint to consult about the Policy and the Procedures and the complaint process available to the individual; this is expressly stated in the Procedures to the University's Policy. If an individual wishes to file a complaint, the Procedures identify the appropriate office to receive and process the complaint, which is dependent on whether the respondent is a student, student group, student union, staff member, faculty member, guest, or the University itself.

During the reporting period, no events required the payment of security costs and no safety concerns arose which the University was required to navigate.

Complaints

The University received only one complaint under its Policy during the period of January 1, 2019 to August 28, 2019. For privacy reasons, the University will not go into the details of the complaint other than as follows. The University received the complaint and it was processed under its Policy and Procedures. The respondent was a student who was alleged to have prevented the expression of a student group, and therefore the matter was investigated and resolved under the University's Policy and its Code of Student Conduct. As the incident was considered minor and presented an opportunity for education, informal measures were used to resolve the matter, with the University educating the respondent on behavioural expectations going forward.

Students have sought an interpretation of the Policy as it relates to the limits of protesting and counter-protesting. The University is meeting with student leadership to discuss how best to approach this issue.

To our knowledge, no complaints were forwarded to the Ontario Ombudsman.

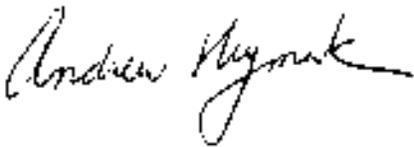
Data Reporting

- Number of complaints received under the free speech policy relating to non-curricular events and to curricular events. 1
- Number of complaints reviewed that were dismissed. 1

- Number of complaints or incidents where the institution determined that the free speech policy was not followed appropriately. 0
- Number of complaints or incidents under the free speech policy which resulted in the institution applying disciplinary measures. 0

I trust this satisfies the questions posed in your memorandum of June 12, 2019. Should you have any questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hrymak". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Andrew Hrymak, PhD
Provost & Vice-President (Academic)