



074c. Freedom of Speech Complaints Procedure

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Policy Statement

The International Foundation Group (IFG) is committed to upholding the principles of freedom of speech and expression as fundamental to its mission and the development of a diverse and open community. This commitment includes protecting the right to express a wide range of ideas, including those that may be unpopular, controversial, or offensive to some, while also balancing this right with the need to maintain a safe, inclusive, and lawful environment.

This policy outlines the procedure for submitting, reviewing, and resolving complaints alleging a violation of, or undue restriction on, freedom of speech within the IFG's jurisdiction, or complaints concerning speech that is alleged to violate other organisation policies or applicable law (e.g., unlawful harassment, incitement to violence, defamation).

IFG sets out its expectations, commitments and requirements concerning freedom of speech and academic freedom in the Freedom of Speech Policy.

Scope

This policy applies to all members, employees, affiliates, and visitors of the college when participating in college-sponsored activities, using college facilities, or communicating through official college channels.

This policy does not replace or supersede any existing policies regarding unlawful harassment, discrimination, or professional conduct. Speech that falls under one of those policies will be addressed through the relevant existing procedure.

This policy is not intended to adjudicate disputes over the substantive merit of an idea or expression.

Definitions

Freedom of Speech: The right to express opinions and ideas without fear of government or institutional restraint, subject to reasonable, content-neutral time, place, and manner restrictions, and limitations recognised by law (e.g., incitement to violence, defamation, true threats, unlawful harassment).

Complainant: The individual or group submitting a complaint under this policy.

Respondent: The individual or group against whom a complaint is made, or the college entity whose decision or action is being challenged.

Designated Officer: The individual or office responsible for receiving and investigating complaints (e.g., the Leadership Team, Senior Management Team or the Board of Governors).

Complaint Procedure

Submission of a Complaint

Complaints must be submitted in writing to the Designated Officer within 10 working days of the alleged event. The complaint must include:

- Complainant Information: Name, contact information, and affiliation with the College.
- Respondent Information: The name(s) and affiliation(s) of the party whose speech or action is being challenged (if known).
- Detailed Description: A clear, factual account of the event, including the date, time, location, and specific speech or action in question.
- Policy Violated/Right Denied: A statement explaining how the event constitutes an undue restriction on freedom of speech or, conversely, how the speech in question violates a specific, lawful college policy or law.
- Desired Resolution: The specific outcome sought by the Complainant.

Initial Review and Triage

The Designated Officer will, within 10 business days of receipt:

- Acknowledge the complaint to the Complainant.
- Assess whether the complaint falls under the scope of this policy or should be referred to another established policy (e.g., Harassment Policy, Student Code of Conduct).
- Dismiss the complaint if it is deemed frivolous, submitted past the deadline, or lacks sufficient factual basis. The Complainant will be notified of any dismissal.

Investigation

If the complaint is accepted, the Designated Officer will:

- Notify the Respondent of the complaint, providing a summary of the allegations and allowing an opportunity to respond, generally within 10 business days.
- Gather evidence, which may include interviewing witnesses, reviewing documentation, and examining relevant policies.
- Maintain confidentiality to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct a thorough investigation and comply with legal requirements.

Resolution

Upon the conclusion of the investigation, the Designated Officer will issue a written determination, which will include:

- A summary of the findings of fact.

- A conclusion as to whether a violation of freedom of speech or a breach of a college policy occurred.
- The remedial or corrective action to be taken, if any. Actions may include policy clarification, training, disciplinary measures, or the removal of an unwarranted restriction.

Appeal Process

The Complainant or the Respondent may appeal the Designated Officer's determination within 10 business days of receiving the decision.

- Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Board of Governors.

Appeals will be considered only based on:

- Procedural Error: A material error in the investigation process that substantially affected the outcome.
- New Evidence: New and relevant evidence that was not reasonably available during the initial investigation.
- Arbitrary/Capricious Finding: A finding that is clearly contrary to the evidence presented.

The reviewing authority will issue a final decision, which will conclude the college internal review process.

Protection Against Retaliation

IFG strictly prohibits retaliation against any individual who, in good faith, makes a complaint under this policy or participates in an investigation. Any alleged retaliation should be immediately reported to the Designated Officer and will be addressed through separate disciplinary procedures.