

REPORT

TO: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)
FROM: Lori Livingston, Provost and Vice President, Academic
DATE: September 1, 2025
SUBJECT: Ontario Tech University Freedom of Expression Policy Annual Report 2025

History

All publicly assisted colleges and universities in Ontario are required to complete, post online, and submit to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) by September 1 of each year an annual report on their campus Free Speech Policy.

This report has been completed in response to this reporting requirement, utilizing the HEQCO Freedom of Speech Annual Report Template.

Section A: Institutional Policy

1. Has your institution amended its free speech policy (or policy framework) since the time of your 2024 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 to the [Freedom of Expression Policy](#) since the last (2024) report. The Policy can be found at: <https://usqc.ontariotechu.ca/policy/freedom-of-expression-policy.php>

2. 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.

The Provost and Vice-President, Academic is the Policy owner and is responsible for any questions regarding interpretation of the Policy. Section 10 of the Policy specifies where complaints made under the Policy are directed, as follows:

- General complaints related to freedom of expression in university space, or the online university environment are submitted to the Office of the Provost for resolution.
- Complaints related to the activities of recognized student organizations are addressed by the Ontario Tech Student Union pursuant to the [Policy on Recognition of Student Organizations](#).
- Complaints regarding conduct by employees are addressed by the following means:
 - Allegations of harassment, violence or discrimination are investigated under the [Policy Against Violence in the Workplace](#), and in accordance with any applicable collective agreements.
 - Other violations will be addressed by the Provost, in accordance with any applicable collective agreements.

3. 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?

All events held on campus are subject to review and approval under the [University's Booking and Use of University Space Policy](#), which requires risk assessments by the Office of Risk Management and Office of Campus Security.

In the past year, one non-curricular event was denied space due in part to an inadequate security plan. The organizers held it off-campus.

Section B: Complaints

1. Between **August 1, 2024** and **July 31, 2025**, 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.

Two student groups, supported by an external organization, filed three free speech complaints after being denied space for events. Investigations found no violations; denials were based on safety, risk, and campus climate concerns in accordance with the *Booking and Use of University Space Policy*.

2. 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.).
 - Large (~700 attendees) student proposed event denied space due to unclear/incomplete Emergency Management Plan and late submission.**
 - Student proposed three-speaker series denied space; booking documents submitted late and incomplete.**
 - Student proposed event denied space during temporary suspension on external speakers at student events at the University due to elevated risks, including a hate speech incident.**
 - 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?

Each of the three complaints were investigated by the Provost and Vice President Academic in accordance with the procedures for the resolution of complaints set out in the *Freedom of Expression Policy* and the procedures for review of decisions under the *Booking and Use of University Space Policy*. A review report and decision was issued by the Provost in respect of each complaint.

Section C: Summary Data

1. 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.	3
Number of official complaints reviewed that did not proceed.	3

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.	3*
To your knowledge, were any free speech complaints forwarded to the Ontario Ombudsman?	No

* While the investigations did not conclude a violation of either the *Freedom of Speech* or the *Booking and Use of University Space Policy*, recommendations were made to improve procedures under the *Booking and Use of University Space Policy*

2. 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, 2024 and July 31, 2025**. 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.

Between August 1, 2024, and July 31, 2025, there were approximately 648 non-curricular events held at the institution.

3. Institutional Comments (if any).

Ontario Tech University remains fully committed to upholding academic freedom and freedom of expression, while ensuring that all University community members can pursue their work and studies in a safe, respectful, and civil environment.

Should there be additional questions, please feel free to contact the Provost's office via email at provost@ontariotechu.ca.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Livingston'.

Lori Livingston
Provost and Vice President, Academic
Ontario Tech University