



ACAD 17:

Academic Freedom Policy

Effective Date: Friday, April 17, 2026

1.0 PURPOSE

This policy affirms the right of faculty, students, and academic staff at Shingwauk Kinooamaage Gamig (SKG) to engage in free inquiry, teaching, research, and expression, while upholding:

- Anishinaabe aadziwin (worldview)
- Indigenous data sovereignty and collective rights
- Ethical, community-accountable scholarship

This policy is intended to work in direct relationship with the Data Sovereignty and Intellectual Property Policy, ensuring that academic freedom and Indigenous knowledge protection are mutually reinforcing.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Faculty, instructors, researchers, and academic staff
- Students engaged in scholarly work
- Visiting scholars and research partners

3.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1 Academic Freedom as Responsibility

Academic freedom at SKG is understood not only as a right, but as a responsibility grounded in relationships—to:

- Community
- Nation
- Land
- Knowledge systems

3.2 Alignment with Anishinaabe Aadziwin

Academic freedom is exercised in a manner that reflects:

- Respect (Mnaadendimowin)

- Responsibility (Gwayakwaadiziwin)
- Truth (Debwewin)
- Wisdom (Nibwaakaawin)

3.3 Balance of Individual and Collective Rights

- Individual scholarly freedom is respected
- Collective knowledge and community rights are protected
- Where tensions arise, collective rights and cultural safety take precedence

3.4 Institutional Alignment (Seven Strategic Pathways)

Academic freedom supports:

- Identity – Strengthening Anishinaabe knowledge systems
- Governance – Ethical and accountable decision-making
- Community – Respectful and reciprocal relationships
- Land – Recognition of land as a source of knowledge
- Partnerships – Trust-based collaboration
- Anishinaabemowin – Protection and revitalization of language
- Communications – Responsible knowledge sharing

4.0 POLICY STATEMENTS

4.1 Rights of Academic Freedom

Faculty and students have the right to:

- Teach, learn, and conduct research without undue restriction
- Question, critique, and expand knowledge systems
- Express diverse, critical, or unpopular views relevant to their field
- Engage in Indigenous, land-based, and community-driven methodologies

4.2 Academic Freedom in Teaching and Learning

Faculty may:

- Design curriculum grounded in Indigenous and Western knowledge systems
- Introduce diverse perspectives and critical discussions
- Encourage respectful dialogue and intellectual exploration

Students may:

- Express ideas and perspectives in academic settings
- Engage in critical inquiry and debate

4.3 Academic Freedom in Research and Scholarship

Researchers may:

- Pursue inquiry aligned with their expertise and interests
- Use Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies
- Disseminate findings through appropriate academic and community channels

All research must align with:

- SKG's Data Sovereignty and Intellectual Property Policy
- Community protocols and ethical standards

4.4 Responsibilities and Limitations

Academic freedom at SKG is exercised within the following responsibilities:

a) Respect for Indigenous Knowledge Systems

- Sacred, ceremonial, or restricted knowledge must not be disclosed without permission

b) Community Accountability

- Research and teaching must not harm communities or misrepresent knowledge

c) Ethical Conduct

- All scholarly activity must meet institutional and professional ethical standards

d) Cultural Safety

- Academic expression must not perpetuate harm, discrimination, or colonial narratives

4.5 Relationship to Data Sovereignty and Intellectual Property

4.5.1 Academic freedom does not override:

- Collective ownership of Indigenous knowledge
- OCAP® principles and community governance of data

4.5.2 Faculty and students must:

- Respect agreements related to data use and knowledge sharing
- Ensure proper attribution and acknowledgment of communities

4.5.3 Where conflicts arise:

- Decisions will be guided by Indigenous data sovereignty principles and community protocols

4.6 Public Expression

Faculty and staff have the right to:

- Express views publicly as scholars and community members

However, they must:

- Clarify when speaking in a personal capacity
- Uphold the integrity and reputation of SKG
- Avoid misrepresentation of Indigenous knowledge

4.7 Protection from Interference

SKG will:

- Protect faculty and students from censorship or undue interference
- Ensure that academic freedom is not constrained by political, institutional, or external pressures

5.0 GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

5.1 Academic Council

- Provides oversight of academic freedom in teaching and research
- Ensures alignment with academic standards and Indigenous frameworks

5.2 Research Ethics / Knowledge Governance Body

- Ensures research aligns with ethical and community protocols

5.3 Elders and Knowledge Keepers

- Provide cultural guidance where academic freedom intersects with Indigenous knowledge

5.4 President and Chief Academic Officer

- Ensures institutional commitment to academic freedom and Indigenous sovereignty

6.0 RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS

Where concerns arise regarding academic freedom:

- Matters will be reviewed through appropriate institutional processes
- Consideration will be given to:

- Academic freedom rights
- Indigenous data sovereignty
- Community impact

Resolution will prioritize restorative, relational approaches.

7.0 EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every **five (5) years**, or as required, to ensure alignment with:

- Institutional priorities
- Indigenous governance standards
- Evolving academic practices

8.0 RELATED POLICIES

- Data Sovereignty and Intellectual Property Policy
- Research Ethics Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Harassment and Discrimination Policy