

MRFA Code of Ethics

1. Preamble

Professionals are self-governed both as groups and as individuals. As higher educational professionals we assume a variety of roles and we often face competing demands on our time and labour – demands that arise from our sometimes conflicting duties. The challenge of discharging these various duties and of maintaining high standards of conduct could not be met by trying to follow a brief list of rules. No such list could govern all of us in our diverse fields, disciplines, and circumstances. No such list could be comprehensive enough to apply to the extensive range of situations and dilemmas we encounter. What is needed instead is a framework for conceiving of higher educational professionalism that will help us determine for ourselves how we should act in the particular situations we face.

This code seeks primarily to convince rather than dictate, to inspire rather than rule. It has both a guiding and a higher educative function. The fundamental belief upon which it rests is that in order to consistently and correctly determine professional standards of conduct one must understand how these standards are derived and justified. So although it serves a guiding function by identifying some standards of professional conduct, since it shows how these standards are derived and justified it also serves a higher educative purpose. Rather than a regulative and limited set of rules it consists of a framework of specific, core values, ethical principles, rights, duties, virtues, and standards of ethical conduct that define the concept of higher educational professionalism. Through identifying the deeper bases of higher educational standards of conduct it articulates and defends an ideal of the higher educational professional. Thus in addition to offering a framework which can help members think through the specific ethical challenges that we face, part of the higher educative function of this code is to contribute to the social milieu in which members of the Association independently endorse, and mutually reinforce, the promotion of the shared values that provide meaning and direction to our work.

On its own a code of ethics cannot ensure that those bound by it will behave ethically. However, a code of ethics can identify the basic shared values and identity-conferring commitments that define us as higher educational professionals and serve as at least part of the basis upon which we rightly earn the respect of our students, our colleagues, our fellow citizens, and most fundamentally, ourselves. As a proud association of equal, autonomous, and responsible professionals, the members of the Mount Royal Faculty Association are united in our resolve to promote these basic values and commitments and thereby maintain the highest standards of professional conduct.

2. Foundational Value: Promoting the Common Good

The purpose of ethics is to promote the good of individuals. The welfare of specific individuals taken together is the common good. Since higher educational professionals collectively share a foundational and general commitment to promote the common good, understood broadly higher education is essentially a moral enterprise. This most basic value of promoting the common good both justifies and helps to generate the set of

specific values that collectively defines the concept of higher educational professionalism.

3. Specific Values

The fundamental goal of promoting the common good generates the specific ethical core values of responsibility, respect for oneself and others, and fairness. The unique character of the higher education mission generates the specific core values of truth and the advancement of knowledge, academic freedom, and excellence. Together these six specific values constitute the basis of higher educational professionalism.

The Six Core Values of Higher Educational Professionalism:

1. Responsibility
2. Respect for Oneself and Others
3. Fairness
4. Truth and the Advancement of Knowledge
5. Academic Freedom
6. Excellence

4. Ethical Principles

Ethical principles are derived from ethical values. They express ideal standards of behavior. Since our values oftentimes conflict we should view ethical principles as providing us with reasons for acting. Principles have weight or importance and although they may not determine decisions for us, they can incline those decisions one way or another. As life is often complex the weight particular ethical principles will carry will vary depending crucially on the specific circumstances in which we find ourselves. This is why codes of ethics are, in an important sense, rationally indeterminate and why it is misguided to look to a code of ethics for neat resolution to the rich and various conflicts and dilemmas we commonly face. The best we can hope for is guidance and insight. Ultimately, however, we must decide for ourselves which principles representing which values should lead us in particular cases.

The following general ethical principles are derived from the specific core values of higher educational professionalism. As such they express standards of professional conduct, generate our specific rights, duties, and virtues, and thereby provide guidance to those seeking to resolve moral conflict and uncertainty.

Value: Responsibility

Ethical Principle: Higher educational professionals take responsibility for their decisions and actions especially as these decisions and actions impact the interests of others.

Most fundamentally we conceive of ourselves as agents responsible for our thoughts, decisions, and actions. Thus responsibility presupposes autonomy. Responsibility is a basic good because it is a pre-condition of self-respect and its affirmation is necessary for our lives to be meaningful and purposeful to us. If we could not take responsibility for what we do then we could not take credit for our successes and achievements. Responsibility's corresponding virtue is accountability, which, in addition to be self-regarding is also an other-regarding virtue. Those who are accountable respect themselves and others by justly accepting credit and blame for what happens. They are sensitive to the impact that their decisions and actions may have on the well-being of others. Although this impact may sometimes be negative being accountable means that those who adversely impact the interests of others take responsibility for these effects and endeavor to explain and justify their decisions and actions if they are rightly called upon to do so. Higher educational professionals strive to be responsible and accountable.

Value: Respect for Oneself and Others

Ethical Principle: Higher educational professionals strive to have and show respect for themselves and others.

Self-respect is a fundamental good; it is a necessary condition of faring well in life since those who lack it cannot sincerely judge that their life is going well from their own perspective. The self-respect of higher educational professionals is dependent at least partly upon a commitment to higher educational professionalism's core values, including the moral value of having respect for others. Having respect for others is fundamentally an acknowledgement that others are bearers of dignity entitled to consideration as autonomous beings who are ends-in-themselves. Higher educational professionals respect themselves and others.

Value: Fairness

Ethical Principle: Higher educational professionals strive to be fair and to be seen to be fair in their dealings with others.

Just as justice is the first virtue of social institutions, fairness is the first virtue of the leaders and the stewards of those institutions. Social institutions that lack fairness are to one degree or another corrupt and corruption harms the common good. It does this in many ways including by undermining trust in those who hold positions of power and responsibility, by fostering cynicism, and by undermining faith that those who succeed do so on the basis of merit. Since both fairness and the appearance of fairness are necessary for the vitality of just social institutions, higher educational professionals entrusted with the advancement of higher learning, scholarship, and research strive both to be and to be seen as being fair in their dealings with others.

Value: Truth and the Advancement of Knowledge

Ethical Principle: Higher educational professionals seek the truth and are committed to the advancement of knowledge.

As members of a cross-generational and international community of teachers, scholars, and researchers higher educational professionals collectively share, and individually undertake, a duty to seek the truth and advance and disseminate knowledge. Our interest in truth and the advancement of knowledge has both a pragmatic and a more noble character. As unique, autonomous individuals we recognize that there is no simple, general formula or recipe for living a good life. Each of us needs to discover the truth about what makes our own life go well. Our collective welfare similarly depends on the advancement of knowledge about our common interests. Beyond the pragmatic elements of these interests we also appreciate the value of seeking truth and the advancement of knowledge for its own sake. Curiosity is a virtue. The learning, study, discovery, and dissemination of knowledge adds purpose and meaning to life. Higher educational professionals affirm the value of learning and enquiry for both its instrumental and its intrinsic values.

Value: Academic Freedom

Ethical Principle: Higher educational professionals should act to safeguard academic freedom.

Academic freedom encompasses a range of more specific freedoms including freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought generally, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of assembly. Together these freedoms collectively form the basis of the higher educational enterprise by making the search for truth and the advancement of knowledge possible. For this reason insofar as truth and the advancement of knowledge are valuable, so too is academic freedom. Just as we need freedom to discover what makes our individuals lives go well, we need it to discover how best to advance our common interests too. Apart from its instrumental value, since autonomy is a pre-condition of responsibility, and since responsibility is necessary for self-respect, academic freedom is necessary for professional respect and is thus also intrinsically valuable. Our self-esteem in our working lives depends upon us being able to take credit for our successes and this in turn is dependent upon us being free to make our own academic career choices and decisions.

We regard the set of freedoms that constitute academic freedom as fundamental Charter rights, each of which generates corresponding duties. Although each of these rights and duties are valuable, one of these in particular – the right to dissent and the corresponding duty to respect such dissent – warrants special attention. The pursuit of truth and the advancement of knowledge is a social venture that crosses generational and national boundaries. Individuals do not advance knowledge in a vacuum. Moreover, since none of us are infallible none of us can determine what others should believe. The truth will most

likely emerge in an environment in which individuals are free to express and defend their views without fear of threat or reprisal. This right to freedom of expression includes the right to responsible dissent. In a climate in which opinions are vigorously debated and challenged the justification for those opinions can emerge. Awareness of the justification of specific truths is necessary for ensuring that those truths will not be held as prejudices whose meaning would be in danger of being lost. The right to dissent and the corresponding duty to respect dissent is necessary for ensuring that the truth will emerge and remain vital and meaningful. More generally, since the scope that the freedoms that constitute academic freedom have are the measure of the maturity and vitality of a society, and since they so directly bear on the pursuit of truth and the advancement of knowledge, higher educational professionals have a unique, basic duty to safeguard these freedoms and to educate society about their importance to the common good.

Value: Excellence

Ethical Principle: Higher educational professionals strive to achieve excellence in their work.

A career in higher education is a privilege that carries with it a responsibility to strive to excel. Higher educational professionals earn their place in the system on the basis of merit and this merit-based system is designed to promote the common good. Cognizant of this higher educational professionals recognize that their ongoing placement and future advancement requires their best efforts, both for the sake of others and their own self-esteem. Higher educational professionals strive to excel.

5. Ethical Standards

Whereas the values and general ethical principles noted above fill out the bottom levels of the framework described in this code of ethics, the following ethical standards attempt to apply these elements to sketch out the levels of the framework that are most immediately related to our work. They are derived from the ethical principles and core values noted above and they pertain to the specific roles we assume as teachers, scholars, researchers, colleagues and administrators, and as members of our wider communities including within Mount Royal, within our specific disciplines and professions, and within broader civil society. Although some of these standards are aspirational, setting ideals of conduct, others are directly enforceable.

5.1 Higher Educational Professionals' Responsibilities and Rights as Teachers

As educators we accept the following responsibilities and duties to our students, and we claim the following rights:

1. Responsibility

1.1 We have a duty to be accountable for the impact that our decisions and actions have on our students.

2. Respect for Oneself and Others

2.1 We have a duty to treat our students with respect, free of exploitation and harassment and mindful of the position of power we occupy over them including by recognizing our proper roles as intellectual advisors.

2.2 We have a duty to be respectful of our diversity – to be tolerant of differences between our students and ourselves, and among our students.

2.3 We have a duty to maintain students' privacy and to keep confidential all information learned about a student except where it is given to a colleague for the purpose of aiding or evaluating the academic progress of the student or when it is given with the prior consent of the student.

3. Fairness

3.1 We have a duty to our students to avoid arbitrarily discriminating against them, to judge them without bias or prejudice.

3.2 We have a duty to our students to evaluate their work and efforts fairly and honestly and to evaluate on the basis of merit.

4. Truth and the Advancement of Knowledge

4.1 We have a general duty to protect and promote academic freedom in our classrooms, including by fairly considering a broad range of views and opinions.

4.2 We have a duty to promote academic honesty and integrity in our courses.

5. Academic Freedom

5.1 We have a duty to protect the academic freedom of our students and to encourage their freedom of inquiry. This includes respect for our students' right to dissent and to express views with which we disagree.

5.2 We have the right to academic freedom. This includes the right to autonomy over the curricula we teach subject only to generally accepted standards of pedagogy and the specific standards of our disciplines. It also includes the right to freedom of thought and expression.

6. Excellence

6.1 We have a duty to maintain high standards of teaching expertise and discipline-specific, appropriate standards of intellectual rigor in our courses. Ideally we should endeavor to regularly improve professionally.

6.2 We have the right to engage in professionally recognized and acceptable development activities where such activities are reasonably expected to enhance our performance of our teaching duties at Mount Royal.

5.2 Our Responsibilities and Rights as Scholars and Researchers

As scholars and researchers we accept the following responsibilities and duties, and we claim the following rights:

1. Responsibility

1.1 We have a duty to be accountable for the impact that our decisions and actions have on our fellow researchers and scholars.

1.2 We have a duty to be accountable for the use of any funds with which we have been entrusted as researchers and scholars awarded to us from Mount Royal or other granting agencies and bodies. We have a duty to allocate or spend these funds responsibly and appropriately.

2. Respect for Oneself and Others

2.1 We have a duty to respect and promote the ethics of research involving human and non-human animals.

3. Fairness

3.1 We have a duty to our fellow researchers and scholars to avoid arbitrarily discriminating against them, to judge them without bias or prejudice.

3.2 We have a duty to our fellow researchers and scholars to evaluate their work fairly and honestly and to make professional assessments on the basis of merit.

3.3 We have a right as researchers, scholars, and experts to pursue outside interests consistent with our primary obligations to Mount Royal and our duties as researchers and scholars.

3.4 We have a duty to avoid conflicts of interest and to fully and appropriately disclose any potentially conflicting obligations in the course of our research and scholarship.

3.5 We have a duty to avoid using any advances in knowledge that we have gained as a result of access to confidential information we have obtained in our capacity as a peer reviewer or referee, or any other position of trust and authority, unless we have the permission of the author.

4. Truth and the Advancement of Knowledge

4.1 We have a duty to base our scholarship and research on an honest search for truth.

4.2 We have a duty to acknowledge any creative or academic contributions that colleagues and students make to the work that we produce.

5. Academic Freedom

5.1 We have a duty to protect and promote our own academic freedom and the academic freedom of our fellow researchers and scholars.

5.2 We have the right to academic freedom. This includes the right to freedom of inquiry. It also includes the right to freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of assembly.

6. Excellence

6.1 We have a duty to develop and improve our competence as scholars and researchers.

6.2 We have the right to engage in professionally recognized and acceptable development activities where such activities are reasonably expected to enhance our performance of our research and scholarly duties at Mount Royal.

5.3 Our Responsibilities and Rights as Colleagues

As colleagues we accept the following responsibilities and duties, and we claim the following rights:

1. Responsibility

1.1 We have a duty to be accountable for the impact that our decisions and actions have on our colleagues. When presenting a professional judgement on a colleague at the request of an appropriate University committee or authority we have the duty to provide the colleague, at least 72 hours in advance, with written copies of our judgement.

1.2 We have a duty to honour and uphold all agreements adopted by the Association, and all verbal and written agreements among ourselves respecting our professional responsibilities and obligations.

2. Respect for Oneself and Others

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2.1 We have a duty to treat our colleagues with respect, free of exploitation and harassment.

2.2 We have a duty to be tolerant and respectful of our differences and diversity.

2.3 We have a duty to maintain our colleagues' privacy and to keep confidential all information learned about a colleague in the course of our duties except where disclosure is justly required as part of our work. We also have a duty to keep confidential information about third parties where such information is confidentially passed along to us.

2.4 We have a duty to not divulge confidential information either pertaining to Association affairs or received in the course of our professional duties, except as required by law or by consent of the Association.

3. Fairness

3.1 We have a duty to our colleagues to avoid arbitrarily discriminating against them, to judge them without bias or prejudice.

3.2 We have a duty to our colleagues to evaluate their work and efforts fairly and honestly and to make professional assessments on the basis of merit.

3.3 We have a duty to act in good faith in our dealings with our colleagues.

3.4 We have the right to speak on behalf of the Association only if we have the informed consent of the Association or its Executive Board.

4. Truth and the Advancement of Knowledge

4.1 We have a duty to be truthful with, and in our dealings about, our colleagues.

5. Academic Freedom

5.1 We have a duty to protect the academic freedom of our colleagues and to encourage their freedom of inquiry. This includes respect for our colleagues' right to dissent and to express views with which we disagree.

5.2 We have the right to academic freedom.

6. Excellence

6.1 We have a duty to maintain high standards of collegiality.

6.2 We have a duty to abide by this code and to encourage our colleagues to abide by it too.

5.4 Our Responsibilities and Rights as Administrators, including as Chairs

As administrators we accept the responsibilities and duties, and we claim the rights, noted in section 5.3. However, of special note are the following additional points:

1. Responsibility

1.1 We have a duty to be accountable for the impact that our decisions and actions have on those over whom we have power, including students, staff, and part-time, term-certain, tenurable, and tenured full-time faculty.

2. Respect for Oneself and Others

2.1 We have a duty to treat students, staff, and part-time, term-certain, tenurable, and tenured full-time faculty with respect, free of exploitation and harassment and mindful of the position of power we occupy over them including by recognizing our proper roles as officials of Mount Royal.

2.2 We have a duty to be respectful of our diversity – to be tolerant of differences among and between ourselves and students, staff, and part-time, term-certain, tenurable, and tenured full-time faculty.

3. Fairness

3.1 We have a duty to develop and follow Mount Royal policies and agreements – and to discharge our duties generally – fairly and in good faith mindful of our responsibilities to Mount Royal’s stakeholders.

3.2 We have a duty to avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest by not using our position for personal gain at the expense of discharging our primary responsibilities to Mount Royal’s stakeholders.

4. Truth and the Advancement of Knowledge

4.1 We have a duty to be truthful with, and in our dealings about, those over whom we have power.

5. Academic Freedom

5.1 We have a duty to protect and promote academic freedom, including a duty to respect and even encourage responsible dissent.

6. Excellence

6.1 We have a duty to maintain high standards of leadership and managerial competence. Ideally we should endeavor to regularly improve professionally.

5.5 Our Responsibilities and Rights as Part-Time Members of Mount Royal University

As members of the wider Mount Royal University community we accept the following responsibilities and duties, and we claim the rights, noted in section 5.3. Of special note, however, are the following revised or additional points:

1. Responsibility

1.1 We have a duty to be accountable for the impact that our decisions and actions have on Mount Royal's stakeholders.

3. Fairness

3.1 We have a duty to speak on behalf of Mount Royal only if we have the informed consent of the University or its Executive or its Board of Governors.

5. Academic Freedom

5.1 We have a general duty to protect and promote academic freedom at Mount Royal.

5.6 Our Responsibilities and Rights as Full-Time Members of Mount Royal University

As members of the wider Mount Royal University community we accept the following responsibilities and duties, and we claim the rights, noted in section 5.3. Of special note, however, are the following revised or additional points:

1. Responsibility

1.1 We have a duty to be accountable for the impact that our decisions and actions have on Mount Royal's stakeholders.

3. Fairness

3.1 We have a duty to speak on behalf of Mount Royal only if we have the informed consent of the University or its Executive or its Board of Governors.

5. Academic Freedom

5.1 We have a general duty to protect and promote academic freedom at Mount Royal.

6. Excellence

6.1 We have a duty to seek reforms which would improve Mount Royal.

6.2 We have a duty to participate in the life of Mount Royal, in its governance and administration through membership on committees and organizations at Board of Governors, the Association, department, or other levels, provided that this participation is consistent with the discharge of our primary responsibilities and our own abilities.

5.7 Our Responsibilities and Rights as Members of our Broader Academic Communities and Organizations

As members of our broader academic communities and organizations we accept the relevant responsibilities and duties, and we claim the relevant rights, noted in sections 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3. Of special note, however, are the following revised and additional points:

1. Responsibility

1.1 We have a duty to be accountable for the use of any funds with which we have been entrusted as agents occupying positions of trust and authority in our professional bodies and associations. We have a duty to spend these funds responsibly and appropriately.

1.2 We have the right to engage in the activities and governance of our professional bodies and associations provided the exercising of this right is consistent with the discharge of our primary responsibilities at Mount Royal.

5.8 Our Responsibilities and Rights as Members of Civil Society

As members of civil society we accept the relevant responsibilities and duties, and we claim the relevant rights, noted in the sections above. We also accept all of the fundamental duties and responsibilities, and we claim all of the rights, common to our fellow citizens. Of special note, however, are the following revised and additional points:

4. Truth and the Advancement of Knowledge

4.1 We have a duty to be truthful with the public about our qualifications and expertise when speaking on matters outside our professional expertise.

5. Academic Freedom

5.1 We have a duty to protect and promote academic freedom.

5.2 We have the right to academic freedom, including the right to exercise all of our academic freedoms off campus.

6. Interpretation

This code of ethics affirms the values of autonomy and responsibility for higher educational professionals and this affirmation extends to the interpretation of the code itself. However, just as it would be a mistake to abandon the responsibility for determining proper standards of professional conduct to some purported ethical authority; it would also be wrongheaded to try to equally value all interpretations of the code. Respect for a member's autonomy over and responsibility for her or his conduct should not be confused with deference to his or her judgment about the proper standards of professional conduct. It is false that all interpretations of the code are equally valid. While it is incumbent upon each of us to interpret the code in our specific circumstances, the best interpretations will be the ones that best promote the common good specifically by advancing the strongest reasons showing the best balance of the promotion of the basic values that underlie the specific dispute in question.

To those who hoped for more from a code of ethics, in particular more certainty and precision in the settling of ethical conflicts and dilemmas, this statement of the measure by which interpretations of this code should be judged will seem disappointingly vague and indeterminate. In response we should take care not to overstate this concern since for a considerable range of cases violations of the standards of ethical conduct will be clear enough. Notwithstanding this, however, it is true that some disputes will be more difficult to settle but that reflects on the nature of these cases. The challenge of determining standards of professional conduct sometimes reduces ultimately to a debate over the ranking of our basic values in cases in which one or more of these values conflict. Not surprisingly sometimes reasonable people will disagree over how best to settle such conflicts. That at least for these cases this code invites critical reading and vigorous debate over interpretation is entirely healthy and fitting considering our profession. Just as the search for truth, understanding, and a fundamental respect for responsible dissent infuses our working lives, it is apt that our code of ethics should be interpreted in this spirit too.