



McGill

Question

TO: Senate
FROM: Lily Han
SUBJECT: Question Regarding Academic Freedom
MEETING DATE: October 19, 2011

PREAMBLE: The university administration's recent (notice of potential) disciplinary actions against academic staff who choose to fulfill their academic duties off-campus to align their actions with considerations of conscience has highlighted the question of how to establish a balance between faculty obligations to adequately fulfill their academic duties and their right to academic freedom.

These two concepts – academic duties and academic freedom - are intricately intertwined. For in order to teach with excellence, that is, to truly fulfill their academic duties, an academic staff member must have free reign to explore new ideas, seek out innovative approaches, and creatively address research issues and challenges in ways that uphold personal morals and ethics, that is, with academic freedom.

Thus, it is in the best interest of the university to recognize that the rights and the obligations of academic staff are neither contradictory nor at cross-purposes, but on the contrary, complementary. And on that premise, the university should strive to establish policies that neither compromise the pedagogical and educational quality of classes, nor suppress, censor, or penalize academic staff for adhering to their ethical and moral standards.

QUESTION: How will the university ensure that the academic freedom of academic staff is not compromised through suppression, censorship or penalization while at the same time ensuring the fulfillment of academic duties?
