



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

University of Toronto
Governing Council

Policy on the Disruption of Meetings

Revised January 28, 1992

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Policy on the Disruption of Meetings

The essential function of a University, to question and debate any subject, requires as a prerequisite freedom of speech, keeping in mind that all persons on campus are subject to the law of the land, and to University policies, when these apply.

Every member of the University is obligated to uphold freedom of speech and the freedom of individuals and groups from physical intimidation and harassment. The administration of the University has a particular responsibility to require from members and visitors a standard of conduct which does not conflict with these basic rights. That standard must allow the maximum opportunity for dissent and debate.

If there is reason to believe that a meeting sponsored by the University or one of its divisions or departments, a student society or a recognized group at the University of Toronto will be disrupted, the University will take reasonable steps to avert disruption. If disruption occurs, and in the opinion of the chair of the meeting freedom of speech is denied, the following steps are recommended:

1. The chair of the meeting should attempt to identify those who are obstructing its business and request them to desist.
2. The chair should inform those who are obstructing of the existence of this policy and of the University's commitment to take the steps necessary to protect freedom of speech, including disciplinary action against University members if appropriate.
3. If the obstruction continues, those responsible should be asked to leave.
4. If they refuse to leave and it is not possible to remove them without risking violent resistance, the meeting should be recessed or adjourned. An adjournment under such circumstances should generally last for as short a time as possible, and the University authorities will undertake to provide the opportunity for the meeting to take place in a suitable environment.
5. If it is determined by the President of the University or his or her designate that the basic right to freedom of speech has been infringed, the opportunity provided by the recess or adjournment should be used to take whatever measures are needed to ensure that the meeting will take place, including the following:
 - a. take steps to advise those involved of the University's determination to protect the basic right of freedom of speech and its intention to use its full authority if necessary to do so;
 - b. consider seeking an injunction against those who might prevent the second meeting from taking place;
 - c. provide appropriate security for the second meeting.
6. If after taking these interim measures the University finds it impossible to preserve freedom of speech and the freedom of individuals and groups from physical intimidation and harassment without the help of outside authorities, the University must be willing to seek such help.

It is understood that the Governing Council should be kept informed, either directly or through its Executive Committee, of threatened or actual denials of freedom of speech, and of any measures that have been taken to deal with the situation.

It is recognized that in extraordinary circumstances it may be necessary for the University administration to take immediate action without the possibility of following the sequence of steps outlined.

Nothing in the foregoing should be interpreted as precluding disciplinary action against University members infringing the right of freedom of speech.

May 25, 1987

Name of Policy changed by the University Affairs Board, January 28th, 1992