# Report on the MAUT Committee on Academic Freedom to the Fall meeting of MAUT-LS

Sharon Rankin, chair of MAUT-LS, asked me in February 2012 to sit on the MAUT Committee on Academic Freedom.

The mandate of the committee is “to develop an MAUT position on what it believes should be in the formal statement on academic freedom which McGill is thinking of developing.”

The committee members include Profs Ian Henderson and Dan Ceres from Religious Studies, Brendan Gillon from Linguistics (the chair) and John Galaty from Anthropology. We first met on February 29 and then several more times in the spring. We reviewed a lot of documents and web sites pertaining to academic freedom. A research assistant was hired and produced a report for the committee in August.

At a meeting in August, the committee agreed to Associate Provost Nathalie Cooke's request for MAUT representation at the Academic Freedom conference held in September 28, which many of you attended. Brendan Gillon presented a paper entitled “Academic freedom and institutional autonomy”, and followed that up with an article in the University World News (<http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20121023151549364>).

At our fall meetings, we worked on a proposal for establishing a Senate committee to work on a statement of academic freedom. (A statement outside the University Regulations has no weight, thus the proceed via Senate.) This work was… detoured…by Bob Myles’ motion at the November 7 MAUT Council meeting that the “CAUT Policy Statement on Academic Freedom" be accepted by MAUT Council as the "MAUT Policy Statement on Academic Freedom”, and that, if accepted, be submitted to all members for ratification in a referendum.

There was a friendly amendment at the meeting, that:

1. The MAUT endorse the values and the spirit of the CAUT Statement on Academic Freedom.

2. The existing MAUT Committee on Academic Freedom be encouraged to examine the CAUT statement’s main elements and give them due consideration during its deliberations. Any statement on academic freedom that the MAUT committee proposes will be brought to the Council and the General Assembly for discussion.

As a result of this, our chair Brendan Gillon announced at the Fall General Meeting of MAUT:

“*The academic freedom committee of MAUT will hold an open meeting in January with a view to learning from colleagues across the campus what threats to academic freedom, both from within the university and from without, they perceive. …We shall also seek out the reflections of members of the scholarly community on academic freedom.*

*Based on the results of this open meeting, MAUT will convene a forum to address the principal issues identified by the open meeting, with speakers invited to address the issues identified.*

*The Committee will use these consultations to draft a statement of academic freedom and bring it to Council and the Spring General Assembly for discussion.”*

So we are essentially back at the original mandate: to develop an MAUT position on what it believes should be in the formal statement on academic freedom which McGill is thinking of developing.

Jane Aitkens, November 30, 2012