

Definition and Components of Academic Freedom

“Academic freedom is the principle of freedom of expression for scholars engaged in discipline-related teaching, learning, research, publication and service. Academic freedom is the foundation of intellectual discovery; it ensures an open search for knowledge and “nourishes the environment within which students develop critical habits of mind” essential to the citizenry of a democratic society. Academic freedom entails both rights and responsibilities.”^[2]

Components of Academic Freedom*^[3]

- In Research & Publication** Academic freedom includes the liberty to conduct research and draw conclusions rooted in evidence. Academic freedom defends researchers’ right to choose methodologies, draw conclusions, and assert the value of their contributions, but does not protect against critiques of their claims.
- In Teaching & Learning** Academic freedom includes the individual instructor’s right to select course materials and content, pedagogy, make assignments and assess student performance. These should be germane to the subject matter. Limits may arise where (1) coordination among instructors for common courses requires agreement on matters of content, syllabi, materials and examinations; (2) there are institutional constraints and concerns rooted in the religious aims of the university, which should be explicitly laid out in writing for instructors prior to appointment; (3) the manner of instruction substantially impairs the rights of others or...demonstrates that the instructor is professionally ignorant, incompetent, or dishonest with regard to their discipline or fields of expertise.”
- In Public Expression** Academic freedom includes the right to bring relevant expertise to the larger community.” and through any mode of communication (including speech, writing and electronic media).As experts operating in the public sphere, faculty must “be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, [and] should show respect for the opinions of others.”

^[2] From: <https://www.oah.org/about/governance/policies/academic-freedom-guidelines-and-best-practices/>

^[3] *Note: Academic Freedoms are subject to University Policies, including but not limited to the policy on intellectual property.