

Academic Freedom Policy

Policy Information

Issuing Office

Office of the Provost

Affected Parties

Faculty

Policy Language

It is the policy of the Institution that all faculty have the right to academic freedom as defined in the University's Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom. We recognize the meaningful value and importance of full discussion in resolving issues relating to academic freedom and preserving good relations between faculty and our administration.

Policy Rationale

Essential to the purpose of Liberty University is the pursuit of truth and the freedom to communicate that truth once it is discovered and understood. Pursuant to this purpose, every faculty member must have freedom to develop within the University an understanding of and love for the truth.

Definition of Glossary Terms

None specified

Procedural Information

Procedures

The Nature of Liberty University as a Christian Institution

1. Liberty University is a community of scholars representing various branches of human knowledge, dedicated to teaching, to research, and to various kinds of service in accordance with its Christian mission.
2. As a Christian university, Liberty University informs and carries out its teaching, research, and all other activities from the perspective of historic Christian faith, within the evangelical Protestant tradition. Thus, fidelity to the historic Christian faith is a necessary and fundamental commitment of teachers and scholars at Liberty.
3. Liberty University makes known its Christian identity in a mission statement and other appropriate public documents.
4. Christian teaching and discipline influence all University activities, while the freedom of conscience of each person is fully respected. All official actions and commitments of the University are to be in accord with its Christian identity.
5. Freedom in teaching and research is recognized and respected according to the principles and methods of each individual discipline, within the confines of the truth and the common good.

Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom

In keeping with the commitment, and consistent with its distinctive nature as a Christian institution, the University subscribes to the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom of the American Association of University Professors as modified below.

Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual faculty member or the Institution as a whole. The common good is dependent upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.

Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. It carries with it duties correlative with rights.

Faculty members are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the Institution.

Faculty members are entitled to freedom in the classroom and in the online environment in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. In addition, academic freedom does not justify a faculty member's adjustment or revision of departmentally agreed upon course materials or violation of any other University policies or contract stipulations.

Liberty University faculty members are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community and their relationship with a university whose distinctive mission is defined by its identity with historic Christian faith imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and Liberty University by their actions, writings, and utterances. Hence they should at all times be accurate, exercise appropriate restraint, show respect for the opinions of others, and make every effort to indicate that they are not acting, writing, or speaking for the Institution.

Procedures for Filing a Grievance Involving Academic Freedom

We believe that the following procedures will ensure that academic freedom-related actions or concerns receive full consideration, and expect all academic personnel to follow these procedures, conducting themselves professionally and in a manner that is conducive to resolution of the issue and consistent with the wellbeing of the University.

Step One: A faculty member with a complaint or concern regarding academic freedom should initially approach his or her supervisor.

Step Two: In the event the faculty member feels the issue remains unresolved following discussions with the supervisor, the faculty member may submit an official grievance in writing to the Office of the Dean outlining the situation and the Dean will respond within 10 working days, or in the case of a conflict of interest, work with the Provost or Online Provost to designate a peer to review the case.

Step Three: A faculty member who feels that his or her grievance relating to academic freedom has not received adequate attention in Step Two may direct the initial grievance and written response to the Office of the Provost or Online Provost. The Office of the Provost or Online Provost will review the grievance and appoint a committee of faculty peers who will recommend a course of action to the Provost, who will make a final determination on the matter. The decision by the Provost or Online Provost will constitute a final resolution of the matter.

Sanctions

Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Exceptions

None