

How is Academic Freedom protected in our Collective Agreement?

AASUA has negotiated robust [Academic Freedom language](#), which outlines that Academic Freedom is essential to the endeavours of “teaching, research, and other scholarly and creative activities and service” (Article 3.01).

All academic staff except Administrative and Professional Officers (APO), and Temporary Librarian, Administrative, and Professional Officers (TLAPO) have academic freedom protections under AASUA’s Collective Agreement.

The Collective Agreement states that academic freedom does not confer legal immunity, or “diminish the obligation of Staff Members to meet their responsibilities to the University” as set out in the Collective Agreement (Article 3.03). Academic Freedom is not a defence against engaging in hate speech, defamation, academic dishonesty, a breach of disciplinary/ethical standards, or any other employment-related misconduct.

As well, in “the exercise of extramural critique, Staff Members shall not purport to speak on behalf of the University unless so authorized. An indication of affiliation with the University should not be construed as speaking on behalf of the University” (Article 3.08). In other words, if you are critiquing any issue extraneous to the University, ensure that you make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of the University. Further, a general principle of labour law holds that off-duty conduct by an employee causing disrepute to the employer may be grounds for employment-related discipline.

Although APOs and TLAPOs do not enjoy academic freedom, all members are entitled to a safe harassment-free workplace; it is the Employer’s obligation to ensure a [safe and harassment-free workplace](#) pursuant to the Collective Agreement, to occupational health and safety legislation and, as applicable, to human rights legislation.

If you are experiencing harassment, the University has a responsibility to investigate your concerns and take steps to address any safety issues, such as harassing behaviour. [Contact the AASUA for assistance](#) in notifying the University of your concern. The AASUA may file a grievance on your behalf if the University does not respond or does not act appropriately.

Academics speak on various topics. When doing so in their capacity as academic staff employees of the Board of Governors of the University of Alberta, fulfilling their employment responsibilities of “teaching, research, and other scholarly and creative activities and service” (Article 3.01)”, academic staff have: “the right to conduct research and to publish the results; to teach, learn, investigate, speculate, comment, question, criticize, and discuss; to select, acquire, disseminate, or critique ideas, documents or other materials in the exercise of the Staff Member's academic responsibilities; and to create, exhibit, perform or adjudicate works of art; all without censorship or deference to prescribed doctrine” (Article 3.05); and “the right

to publicly disclose information about risks to research participants or the general public, or threats to public interest, that become known in the course of their research” (Article 3.06). While the line between academic service to the Board of Governors and ones’ own personal time is not always clear, academic freedom—a term of employment—does not extend to a person’s off-duty personal life.

Members are invited to read in full AASUA’s Academic Freedom article, which begins on page 10 of the [Collective Agreement](#).