

What is Academic Freedom?

Academic staff at the University of Alberta are committed to the pursuit of truth, the advancement of learning, and the dissemination of knowledge through teaching, research and other scholarly and creative activities and service. Though Canadian adjudicators have recognized Academic Freedom as an important principle, these rights have not been enshrined in Canadian legislation. Instead, academic staffs' Collective Agreements — their terms of employment — offer the strongest legal protections for Academic Freedom in Canada. Article 3 of the Collective Agreement states:

Academic Freedom

- 3.01 *The University of Alberta is committed to the pursuit of truth, the advancement of learning, and the dissemination of knowledge through teaching, research and other scholarly and creative activities and service. Academic Freedom is essential to these endeavours.*
- 3.02 *Each Staff Member is expected to engage in these endeavours, or to support the engagement of these endeavours.*
- 3.03 *The parties to the Agreement agree to uphold and protect the principles and practices of Academic Freedom. Academic Freedom shall not confer legal immunity; nor shall it diminish the obligation of Staff Members to meet their responsibilities to the University as set out in this Agreement.*
- 3.04 *The collection, organization, and dissemination of knowledge will be done freely and without bias in support of the research, teaching, and study needs of the University community. The Parties agree that no censorship based on moral, religious, or political values shall be exercised or allowed against any material acquired or deposited in the library collections of the University.*
- 3.05 *Academic Freedom specifically entails, but is not necessarily limited to, the right to:*
 - a) *conduct research and to publish the results;*
 - b) *teach, learn, investigate, speculate, comment, question, criticize, and discuss;*
 - c) *select, acquire, disseminate, or critique ideas, documents or other materials in the exercise of the Staff Member's academic responsibilities;*
 - d) *create, exhibit, perform or adjudicate works of art:*

all without censorship or deference to prescribed doctrine.
- 3.06 *Academic Freedom does not require neutrality nor does it preclude commitment on the part of a Staff Member. Rather, Academic Freedom makes such commitment possible. It carries with it the duty to use that*

freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base research, teaching, publication, and other forms of scholarly expression in the search for knowledge. Accordingly, Staff Members shall have 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.

- 3.07 In the exercise of Academic Freedom, Staff Members shall respect the Academic Freedom of others.*
- 3.08 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.*
- 3.09 Notwithstanding Articles 3.01 to 3.07, a Staff Member who has agreed to a research grant or contract will comply with its terms and conditions.*
- 3.10 This Article 3 does not apply to APO Members and the administrative professionals in TLAPO (Schedules F and G, respectively).*

Disputes are carried through the grievance arbitration process, where the arbitrator can determine what Academic Freedom is at the institution; however, the ability to negotiate or improve Academic Freedom contract language is subject to the same limitations as any proposal in the collective bargaining process.