

IDAHO STATE UNIVERSITY
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (ISUPP)
Academic Freedom
ISUPP 4040

POLICY INFORMATION

Policy Section: *Academic Affairs*

Policy Title: *Academic Freedom*

Responsible Executive (RE): *Executive Vice President and Provost*

Sponsoring Organization (SO): *Faculty Senate*

Dates: Effective Date: *May 2002*

Revised: *August 1, 2018*

I. INTRODUCTION

This policy defines parameters of academic freedom that guide practices and relationships among faculty, students, and administration at Idaho State University. Academic freedom is essential for the protection of the rights of the faculty member in teaching, service, and scholarly activity. Idaho State University (ISU or University) affirms its belief that academic freedom should not be abridged or abused. Institutions of higher education are conceived for the benefit of the common good and not to solely further the interests of the faculty member or the institution. The University faculty have a clear and compelling interest in matters of educational policy within the limits prescribed by federal and state law and the regulations of the Idaho State Board of Education. Freedom in research and teaching is fundamental to the advancement of knowledge. These freedoms carry with them duties and responsibilities correlative with rights.

Faculty are citizens, members of a learned profession, and educational officers of the University. When they speak or write as citizens outside the University setting, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes unique obligations. Faculty should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence, they should at all times be accurate, show due respect for the opinions of others, and make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution. Expressions of dissent and attempts to produce change should be carried out in ways that a) are not slanderous or libelous; b) do not cause physical harm to individuals; and c) do not damage facilities or interfere with the safety of operations.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

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A: What academic freedom protects*

1. *Academic freedom means that both faculty members and students can engage in intellectual debate without fear of censorship or retaliation.*
2. *Academic freedom establishes a faculty member's right to remain true to his or her pedagogical philosophy and intellectual commitments. It preserves the intellectual integrity of our educational system and thus serves the public good.*
3. *Academic freedom in teaching means that both faculty members and students can make comparisons and contrasts between subjects taught in a course and any field of human knowledge or period of history.*
4. *Academic freedom gives both students and faculty the right to express their views — in speech, writing, and through electronic communication, both on and off campus — without fear of sanction, unless the manner of expression substantially impairs the rights of others or, in the case of faculty members, those views demonstrate that they are professionally ignorant, incompetent, or dishonest with regard to their discipline or fields of expertise.*
5. *Academic freedom gives both students and faculty the right to study and do research on the topics they choose and to draw what conclusions they find consistent with their research, though it does not prevent others from judging whether their work is valuable and their conclusions sound. To protect academic freedom, universities should oppose efforts by corporate or government sponsors to block dissemination of any research findings.*
6. *Academic freedom means that the political, religious, or philosophical beliefs of politicians, administrators, and members of the public cannot be imposed on students or faculty.*
7. *Academic freedom gives faculty members and students the right to seek redress or request a hearing if they believe their rights have been violated.*
8. *Academic freedom protects faculty members and students from reprisals for disagreeing with administrative policies or proposals.*
9. *Academic freedom gives faculty members and students the right to challenge one another's views, but not to penalize them for holding them.*
10. *Academic freedom protects a faculty member's authority to assign grades to students, so long as the grades are not capricious or unjustly punitive. More broadly, academic freedom encompasses both the individual and institutional right to maintain academic standards.*
11. *Academic freedom gives faculty members substantial latitude in deciding how to teach the courses for which they are responsible.*
12. *Academic freedom guarantees that serious charges against a faculty member will be heard before a committee of his or her peers. It provides faculty members the right to due process¹, including the assumption that the burden of proof lies with those who brought the charges, that*

faculty have the right to present counter-evidence and confront their accusers, and be assisted by an attorney in serious cases if they choose.

B: What academic freedom does not protect

- 1. Academic freedom does not mean a faculty member can harass, threaten, intimidate, ridicule, or impose his or her views on students.²*
- 2. Student academic freedom does not deny faculty members the right to require students to master course material and the fundamentals of the disciplines that faculty teach.*
- 3. Neither academic freedom nor tenure protects an incompetent teacher from losing his or her job. Academic freedom thus does not grant an unqualified guarantee of lifetime employment.*
- 4. Academic freedom does not protect faculty members from colleague or student challenges to or disagreement with their educational philosophy and practices.*
- 5. Academic freedom does not protect faculty members from non-university penalties if they break the law.*
- 6. Academic freedom does not give students or faculty the right to ignore college or university regulations, though it does give faculty and students the right to criticize regulations they believe are unfair.*
- 7. Academic freedom does not protect students or faculty from disciplinary action, but it does require that they receive fair treatment and due process.*
- 8. Academic freedom does not protect faculty members from sanctions for professional misconduct, though sanctions require clear proof established through due process.*
- 9. Neither academic freedom nor tenure protects a faculty member from various sanctions — from denial of merit raises, to denial of sabbatical requests, to the loss of desirable teaching and committee assignments—for poor performance. If minor, sanctions should be grievable; if major, they must be preceded by an appropriate hearing.*
- 10. Neither academic freedom nor tenure protects a faculty member who repeatedly skips class or refuses to teach the classes or subject matter assigned.*
- 11. Though briefly interrupting an invited speaker may be compatible with academic freedom, actually preventing a talk or a performance from continuing is not.*
- 12. Academic freedom does not protect a faculty member from investigations into allegations of scientific misconduct³ or violations of sound university policies, nor from appropriate penalties should such charges be sustained in a hearing of record before a faculty body.*

*Nelson, C. (December 10, 2010). Defining academic freedom. *Inside Higher Education*.

Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2010/12/21/defining-academic-freedom>

¹ See Policy #4041 Grievance Procedures for Institutional Faculty

² See Policy #5000 Student Conduct Code

³ See Policy #7060 Misconduct in Research and Scholarship

III. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Office of Academic Affairs has the authority and responsibility to update and review this policy as necessary. It is expected that any suggested changes to this policy will also be addressed in collaboration with the Faculty Senate. The policy for Academic Freedom applies to all faculty.