

Academic Freedom: What It Should Include & Exclude

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CAUT Council

November 25, 2011



Univ. of Toronto, *Purpose of the University*

“Within the unique university context, the most crucial of all human rights are the rights of freedom of speech, academic freedom, and freedom of research. And we affirm that these rights are meaningless unless they entail the right to raise deeply disturbing questions and provocative challenges to the cherished beliefs of society at large and of the university itself.

“It is this human right to radical, critical teaching and research with which the University has a duty above all to be concerned; for there is no one else, no other institution and no other office, in our modern liberal democracy, which is the custodian of this most precious and vulnerable right of the liberated human spirit.”

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/mission.htm>



What should be included:

- Freedom in teaching, research, creative and scholarly work, and service without restriction by prescribed doctrine;
- Freedom of academic staff, including professional librarians, to acquire, generate, preserve, and share knowledge resources;
- Freedom to participate in collegial governance without reprisal;
- Freedom to comment intramurally in institutional policy and practice;
- Freedom to comment extramurally on issues within and beyond one's academic expertise.

What should be excluded:

- Respectful workplace discourse that curtails academic freedom;
- Claims that peer review or disciplinary convention guarantees or trumps academic freedom;
- Any conflation of academic freedom with institutional autonomy;
- Claims that institutional “mission” or “leadership” or “autonomy” limits academic freedom;
- Claims that institutional “loyalty” or “reputation” require the infringing or abridging of academic freedom;
- Claims that the law is an absolute limit to academic freedom.

AUCC Statement on Academic Freedom 2011



Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
Association des universités et collèges du Canada

<http://www.aucc.ca/media-room/news-and-commentary/canadas-universities-adopt-new-statement-on-academic-freedom>



AUCC Statement on Academic Freedom 2011

Division within the AUCC family?

University of Toronto *President's Comment
on AUCC Statement on Academic Freedom*

<http://www.president.utoronto.ca/Page31.aspx>



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