

**Academic freedom:** *is the freedom of teachers, students, and [academic](#) institutions to pursue knowledge wherever it may lead, without undue or unreasonable interference.<sup>[1]</sup> At the minimum, academic freedom involves the freedom to engage in the entire range of activities involved in the production of knowledge, including choosing a research focus, determining what to teach in the classroom, presenting research findings to colleagues, and publishing research findings.<sup>[2]</sup> Still, academic freedom has limits. In the United States, for example, according to the widely recognized "1940 Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure"<sup>[3]</sup>, teachers should be careful to avoid controversial matter that is unrelated to the subject. When they speak or write in public, they are free to express their opinions without fear from institutional censorship or discipline, but they should show restraint and clearly indicate that they are not speaking for their institution. Academic [tenure](#) protects academic freedom by ensuring that teachers can be fired only for causes such as gross professional incompetence or behavior that evokes condemnation from the academic community itself.*

### **The rationale for academic freedom:**

*Proponents of academic freedom believe that the freedom of inquiry by students and faculty members is essential to the mission of the academy. They argue that academic communities are repeatedly targeted for repression due to their ability to shape and control the flow of information. When scholars attempt to teach or communicate ideas or facts that are inconvenient to external political groups or to authorities, they may find themselves targeted for public vilification, job loss, imprisonment, or even death. For example, in North Africa, a professor of public health discovered that his country's infant mortality rate was higher than government figures indicated. He lost his job and was imprisoned.<sup>[4]</sup>*

*The fate of [biology](#) in the [Soviet Union](#) is also cited as a reason why society has an interest in protecting academic freedom. A Soviet biologist named [Trofim Lysenko](#) rejected Western scientific advances and proposed a new, unscientific approach to biology (called [Lysenkoism](#)) that was based on the principles of [dialectical materialism](#). Because of their propaganda value, Lysenko's ideas proved appealing to the Soviet leadership, and he became the director of the Soviet Academy of Agricultural Sciences; subsequently, Lysenko directed a purge of scientists who professed "harmful ideas," resulting in the expulsion, imprisonment, or death of hundreds of Soviet scientists. Lysenko's unscientific ideas were implemented on collectivized farms in the Soviet Union and China. Famines that resulted partly from Lysenko's influence are believed to have killed 30 million people in China alone.<sup>[5]</sup>*

## **Academic freedom for professors:**

*The concept of academic freedom as a right of faculty members (Lehrfreiheit in German) is an established part of German, [English](#), [French](#) and American academic cultures. In all four a faculty member may pursue research and publish their findings without restraint, but they differ in regard to the professor's freedom in a classroom situation.*

*In the German tradition, professors are free to try to convert their students to their personal viewpoint and philosophical system.<sup>[14]</sup> Nevertheless, professors are discouraged or prohibited from stating their views, particularly political views, outside the class; in regard to his teaching, there should be no duties required of the professor, no prescribed syllabus, and no restriction to a particular subject.*

*In the United States, academic freedom is generally taken as the notion of academic freedom defined by the "1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure," jointly authored by the [American Association of University Professors](#) (AAUP) and the Association of American Colleges ("AAC")(now the [Association of American Colleges and Universities](#)).<sup>[15]</sup> These principles state that "Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject."<sup>[15]</sup> The statement also permits institutions to impose "limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims," so long as they are "clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment."<sup>[15]</sup> The six regional accreditors work with American colleges and universities, including private and religious institutions, to implement this standard. Additionally, the AAUP, which is not an accrediting body, works with these same institutions. The AAUP does not always agree with the regional accrediting bodies on the standards of protection of academic freedom and tenure.<sup>[16]</sup> The AAUP lists those colleges and universities which it has found to violate these principles.<sup>[17]</sup>*

*A professor at a public French university, or a researcher in a public research laboratory, is expected, as are all [civil servants](#), to behave in a neutral manner and to not favor any particular political or religious point of view during the course of his duties. However, the academic freedom of university [professors](#) is a fundamental principle recognized by the laws of the Republic, as defined by the [Constitutional Council](#); furthermore, statute law declares about [higher education](#) that teachers-researchers [university professors and assistant professors], researchers and teachers are fully independent and enjoy full [freedom of speech](#) in the course of their [research](#) and [teaching](#) activities, provided they respect, following university traditions and the dispositions of this code, principles of tolerance and objectivity ([Education Code, L952-2](#)). The nomination and promotion of professors is largely done through a process of [peer review](#) rather than through normal administrative procedures.*

## **Academic freedom for colleges and universities**

*The [Supreme Court of the United States](#) said that academic freedom means a university can "determine for itself on academic grounds:*

1. who may teach,
2. what may be taught,

3. how it should be taught, and
4. who may be admitted to study." ([\*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke\*](#), 438 U.S. 265, 312. 1978.)