



FS-# 2015/2016

I. Proposal Name:

Defining Academic Freedom in the Faculty Handbook

II. Sponsoring Committee:

Faculty Handbook Committee

III. Background:

Academic Freedom is referenced in the UCO Faculty Handbook. Section 2.10 quotes RUSO policy that “Administrators must protect, defend, and promote academic freedom.” Appendix H.1.1 is concerned with academic freedom, but the concept is not defined. It is thus subject to misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

The American Association of University Professors, as a chief promoter of academic freedom, defines the concept and its scope. Changes in technology and legal precedent necessarily require modifications to the scope or protections of academic freedom over time.

IV. Proposal Statement:

Append text to the end of Appendix H.1.1:

“C. The most current definitions outlining the scope of Academic Freedom are provided by the AAUP Policies Documents and Reports manual. The basic protections of academic freedom are described below:

1. Academic freedom protects individuals’ right to engage in intellectual debate without fear of censorship or retaliation.
2. Academic freedom protects faculty members’ right to maintain academic standards, to deliver course content in keeping with their educational philosophy, and to determine grading practices. Limitations to educational practices according to Ethical Principles are defined elsewhere in the faculty handbook.
3. Academic freedom protects faculty members’ right to express their views in speech, writing, or electronic communication, on or off campus. Faculty and students may challenge one another’s views, but may not penalize others for holding any views. Faculty members and students may disagree with or seek revision of administrative policies and proposals without fear of reprisal. Sanctions may only be considered if the

manner of expression impairs the rights of others or if the professional views expressed are in violation of the Ethical Principles defined elsewhere in the faculty handbook.

4. Academic freedom protects faculty members' and students' right to perform scholarship or research on the topic they choose and to draw professional conclusions without interference from internal or external sources. It does not prevent others from judging whether the work is sound or valuable.
5. Academic freedom protects faculty members' and students' right to be free from imposition of political, religious, or philosophical beliefs by internal or external sources. It does not prevent students from being exposed to certain beliefs that are a subject matter in course content.
6. Academic freedom protects faculty members' right to seek redress and have a hearing before a faculty body if there are objections to a faculty member's speech. The objecting party must positively demonstrate to a faculty body that the objectionable speech is not protected by academic freedom before any sanctions can be applied.