

Academic Freedom and Harassment

The classroom or other instructional settings (e.g., studio, laboratory) present special problems because academic freedom protects the expression of ideas, even where the idea or its expression is perceived to be offensive. The educational process is predicated upon the free exchange of ideas and the [Policy Prohibiting Harassment](#) shall not be interpreted to prohibit free expression protected by the First Amendment. The National AAUP's Statement on Professional Ethics provides that professors should avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. The 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure provides that Professors should not introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Accordingly, if the complained of conduct occurs in an instructional context and is germane to the subject matter being taught, wide latitude is required for professional judgment in determining the appropriate content and presentation of the academic material being taught. Therefore, harassment in violation of the Policy Prohibiting Harassment will not be found to exist in an instructional setting unless the complained of conduct:

1. Is directed toward an individual or group based on one or more of the traits listed in Section I,
2. Is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter an individual's educational environment,
3. Creates an objectively hostile learning environment, and
4. Is, in fact, perceived as hostile by the complainant.

Any questions or concerns as to the appropriateness of academic material should be directed to the department chairperson or dean. Questions concerning harassment should be directed to the Office of Employment Equity.

Resources To Help You

[Office of Employment Equity - Contacts](#)

732-932-3020, ext.
4030

[Office of Employment Equity - Services](#)

[Harassment Information](#)

[Policy Prohibiting Harassment](#) (PDF)



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