

Academic Freedom

As a necessary condition for fulfilling their duties and functions as teacher-scholars, all faculty members (tenured, tenure-track, non-tenure-track full-time, or part-time adjunct) are entitled to full academic freedom in teaching, in research, and in disseminating the products of their scholarship. One's academic freedom is intrinsically linked to one's responsibilities as a scholar and member of the Villanova community, as detailed in this Faculty Handbook.

Because academic freedom is predicated on a degree of scholarly support for one's positions on issues, it does not extend to espousal of propositions that lack any scholarly support. Scholarly discourse on religious matters is protected.

In extramural academic settings such as professional lectures and conferences, when speaking as a member of a learned profession, faculty members enjoy this same freedom of research and dissemination of results as described above.

In the classroom, academic freedom is task-specific, deriving from and governing one's role as an instructor in a given discipline or disciplines. Faculty members are free to present and discuss their subject matter and related issues in accord with relevant academic standards and students' legitimate academic rights and responsibilities. Except when the University explicitly asks them to discuss specific issues of University concern, faculty "should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject." Faculty members are responsible for upholding the integrity of reasoned inquiry, open discussion, and free expression. Especially when dealing with controversial topics, faculty members are expected to lead students in a scholarly evaluation of the subject matter.

Student performance should be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct unrelated to academic standards. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the information or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but students are responsible for learning the content of the course of study in which they are enrolled, including matters with which they disagree. The validity of their ideas, theories, arguments and views should be measured against the relevant academic standards.

Academic freedom per se does not extend to public statements that are unrelated to one's faculty status and academic expertise. Faculty members are free to exercise their constitutionally-protected freedom of expression, but in exercising that freedom, they will take care not to claim or suggest that the views so expressed are sanctioned by, or necessarily related to their faculty status at, Villanova. This is especially important in view of the fact that the public may judge their profession and Villanova University by their utterances.