



## Policy Statement on Academic Freedom, Electronic Communications and Social Media

Academic freedom includes the right, without restriction by prescribed doctrine, to teach and discuss; freedom to carry out research and disseminate and publish the results thereof; freedom to produce and perform creative works; freedom to engage in service to the institution and the community; freedom to express one's opinion about the institution, its administration, and the system in which one works; freedom to acquire, preserve, and provide access to documentary material in all formats; and freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies. Academic freedom always entails freedom from institutional censorship. This Policy Statement on Academic Freedom, Electronic Communications and Social Media clarifies and reaffirms the rights articulated in the Policy Statement on Academic Freedom. It neither diminishes nor dilutes these rights — rights which remain essential if post-secondary institutions are to continue serving the common good of society.

The rights of academic staff to exercise their academic freedom do not vary according to the medium in which they are exercised. These rights are as essential to academic activities undertaken electronically as to those undertaken in speech, writing, and/or other media. The right to exercise academic freedom is the same regardless of whether that exercise takes place within or outside the bounds of any particular institution. The following list of examples is intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

In making instructional materials available electronically, including on institutional and/or publicly accessible platforms, academic staff have the same rights of academic freedom as when they circulate such material in printed, audio and/or visual form. Academic staff also have the right to promote and guide student participation in class discussions and in public fora (including electronic sites).

In posting information about their research, teaching, and intellectual interests on web sites or other electronic platforms, regardless of location or source of the host, academic staff have the same rights of academic freedom as when they present such material in speech, print and/or other media for the benefit of students, colleagues, publishers, community groups, and so on.

In publishing their work in electronic [formfora](#), academic staff have the same rights of academic freedom as when they publish their work in other forms.

In expressing in electronic fora and social media their views on topics of public interest, whether or not those topics fall within their area of professional expertise, academic staff have the same rights of academic freedom as when they engage in any other form of public discourse.

In searching electronic fora and social media to pursue topics of research there should be no restriction to access any sources of information due to web filtering or other means. Having material censored and inaccessible due to these platforms hinders the exercise of academic freedom.

Academic staff are entitled to privacy rights, including the right to be free from surveillance and data collection. Administrators have the responsibility to protect electronic communications from surveillance and data collection. Electronic mail, feeds, postings or links sent or received by academic staff have the same protections as communications by conventional mail (through national and institutional postal services and private carriers and couriers). Administration and academic staff must treat electronic mail as private and inviolable.

Outsourcing information technology services poses a significant threat to privacy protection and academic freedom. Because of the significant risk, outsourcing of IT services should be prohibited.

**Approved by the CAUT Council, November 2015.**  
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