

The Australian National University Statement on Academic Freedom 2018

“The establishment and maintenance of academic freedom is more important than the actual research and teaching done inside the walls of a university.”¹

Sir Douglas Copland
Inaugural Vice-Chancellor
Australian National University
1948 – 1952

Academic freedom is fundamental to the life of The Australian National University. Our founding values require us to advance and transmit knowledge by undertaking research, education and public engagement of the highest quality.

Members of ANU practise their academic work within the wider Australian community and enjoy the rights to free expression that are protected by the law within defined limits. Academic freedom is distinct from, but ultimately dependent on, this general freedom.

Academic freedom is enjoyed by all members of ANU: staff, students and official visitors. It is exercised through activities relating to that membership centred on the three pillars of teaching, research and public engagement.

Academic freedom enables scholars within the University to pursue knowledge, speak and write without unreasonable restriction. This includes the right to comment on political matters including policies affecting higher education, and the actions of the University, on the basis of legitimate intellectual and professional criteria.

The Australian National University affirms its institutional right and responsibility, and the rights and responsibilities of its members, to free enquiry. The University will defend the right of our staff and students to exercise their academic freedom, provided it is done with rigor and evidence.

Commensurate with our commitment to global excellence, ANU will support the rights of academic freedom universally: we believe all scholars should be afforded these rights.

The Australian National University will continue to defend the rights of its members to challenge the boundaries of the known. We are a community of robust debate, unafraid of uncomfortable ideas. This debate will be conducted in a manner consistent with our values, for the advancement of knowledge.

¹ Sir Douglas Copland in letter to the Hon. Prime Minister Sir Robert Gordon Menzies, 31 January 1948, Menzies Papers MS4936, 1/8, National Library of Australia