

The Australian National University Statement on Freedom of Expression 2019

The Australian National University champions open, rigorous and respectful debate on the widest range of issues. Freedom of Expression is a core principle of the University's mission to foster scholarly enquiry and the generation of new ideas.

ANU recognises Freedom of Expression as a fundamental human right. Members of ANU community will be afforded protection to exercise Freedom of Expression as part of their duties, to the extent that this lies within the power of the University. This does not imply the University's endorsement of views so expressed under this Freedom.

Lawful Freedom of Expression applies to all staff, students and invited speakers on campus. Education requires the right to hear dissenting views and to be challenged in one's opinions. Debating unpopular views may be a means of arriving closer to the truth. The right to Freedom of Expression also entails taking responsibility for its consequences.

There are limits to free expression which arise when this right conflicts with other human rights, or when the conditions of open, rigorous and respectful debate are undermined. Within these constraints and those of lawful expression, a hearing should be available to all voices and views that any member of ANU community considers to deserve it.

Freedom of Expression may take the form of acts of public assembly and demonstrations of dissent. When protest is disruptive, ANU will have regard to what is lawful, to maintaining conditions of civil discourse and to public safety.

Threats to Freedom of Expression may arise for staff and students working beyond our borders. ANU will uphold principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression, whilst acknowledging that partner institutions are governed by their local laws.

ANU should review its policies, procedures, and codes of conduct to ensure that their provisions and implementation are aligned with the principles enunciated in this Statement and in the ANU Statement on Academic Freedom. In particular, it must be made clear that lawful speech and protest do not as such constitute misconduct, and that all ANU staff, students and invited speakers have a right to criticise the University's decisions, policies and decision makers within the constraints of law.