2.03 Academic Freedom and Contracts

Houston Baptist University is a faith-based institution whose faculty are governed by the Preamble to the University's Bylaws as well as the vision, mission, and purposes of the University – the institution’s foundational statements. The Preamble is attested to in writing at the time of the appointment. We acknowledge God as the source of truth, both his special and his general revelation, and thus as the justification for academic freedom. Put another way, we are free to pursue genuine truth in an academic setting because that pursuit draws us closer to God. Academic freedom is subject to the limitations spelled out in the foundational statements – limitations which help ensure that we are pursuing the genuine truth to which the University is already committed. It is in that context that the institution understands academic freedom and affords to faculty the freedom to teach, research, and publish findings.

The instructor is entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing his or her subject, but should be careful not to introduce controversial matter that has no relation to the subject. The instructor, as a citizen, member of a learned profession, and an officer of an educational institution with a specific religious mission and vision, will also take care not to contradict the Preamble or the mission and vision of the institution when expressing his or her views in the public square. When the faculty member speaks or writes as a citizen, the faculty member is free to express expert opinion on all matters; but the teacher's special position as a member of this institution and in the community imposes special obligations. As a person of learning and an educational officer, the teacher should remember that the public may judge the profession and the institution by personal utterances. Hence, the faculty member should at all times be accurate, avoid contradicting the foundational statements of the institution, and should exercise appropriate restraint, showing respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that the faculty member is not an institutional spokesperson.

If a faculty member should be alleged to have taught or spoken in opposition to the institution’s foundational statements, the best first course of action is for a member of the University community who is concerned about what was said or taught to approach his or her colleague to discuss it. If there is no resolution, the President will handle the issue as a contract matter, taking counsel from a diverse group of advisors drawn from the University community. A simple allegation based on rumor or hearsay is insufficient to warrant action of any kind; rather, evidence and thoughtful dialog in the context of Christian love is required in such matters.

Research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution. A faculty member is usually initially issued a contract for one academic year, and may thereafter receive additional one-year contracts before becoming eligible for a multi-year contract. Multi-year contracts are offered at the discretion of the President. Faculty members have no claim on future employment beyond the term of their contracts, and understand that employment will cease at the end of the term unless the University, in its sole discretion, elects to offer an additional term of employment. Satisfactory performance does not guarantee renewal of appointment, and no stigma attaches merely upon non-renewal. Faculty contracts may be terminated at any time for cause by the University on grounds that include, but may not be limited to, the following: moral turpitude, incompetence, insubordination, improper or illegal conduct, neglect of duties, mental or medical incapacity, financial exigency, or programmatic change. No agreement outside the written contract that is not in writing and signed by the President is binding on the University.

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Effective Date: 04/04/2013
Revision Dates: 
This policy applies to: 
Exempt Staff
Non-Exempt Staff
Faculty

Faculty Handbook