



Guidelines on Academic Freedom Protection Procedures

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Introduction

The International Political Science Association (IPSA) has, as one of its main missions, the support of Academic Freedom (AF), which is linked to its consideration for general ethical standards. As such, IPSA aims at playing a pivotal role in supporting national policies on academic freedoms, in proposing action for promoting freedom in academia and for protecting scholars at risk. The IPSA policy regarding AF violations focuses on promoting rules, procedures and frameworks established for defending academic freedom from outside attacks. To fulfil this objective, IPSA adopted a formal procedure to monitor violations of academic freedoms, and to address and react to threats and attacks regarding AF. Moreover, IPSA ran a survey among national political science associations. One of the outcomes was a widely shared request for AF guidelines provided by IPSA that could support the national associations, which aim at either upgrading an existing policy or at drafting a new policy on AF.

The IPSA Committee on Academic Freedom and Ethics considered it relevant to meet this request in order to provide a concrete and specific service to the national associations in the realm of AF. As a result, the Committee produced the current document following consultations. It suggests guidelines that could support political science associations when they aim at creating or refreshing their own protocols for protecting academic freedoms for the benefit of researchers and academics.

These Guidelines provide minimum standards on the scope, shape and limits of academic freedoms, which could be useful in different regions and countries.

Definition

IPSA suggests referring to the [UNESCO 1997 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-education Teaching Personnel](#) when defining academic freedom. In this framework, AF is defined as the freedom of academics and researchers to work freely and effectively in undertaking their research and teaching, and to disseminate their ideas and results to colleagues and the public, nationally as well as internationally. It also includes the liberty of scholars and researchers to express opinions freely about the institution or system in which they work, to fulfil their functions without discrimination or fear of repression by the State or any other player, and to participate in professional or representative academic bodies.



The following non-exhaustive list of actions could be considered as examples of clear violations of academic freedom.

- Actions banning the study or the teaching of certain topics, impeding the actual process of research or teaching of those topics, interfering with the writing and publicizing of research findings and/or their incorporation into teaching materials.
- Actions banning speakers or the organization of academic conferences on certain topics.
- Actions penalizing academics for expressing their ideas as citizens by terminating their academic employment or by taking other measures that impose deprivations on their professional life as academics.

Academic freedoms can also be seriously compromised through indirect measures, involving retention, promotion and tenure policies, performance and research management systems, changes in funding for research and resources, or alterations in the teaching curriculum.

Procedures

- Provide in its Constitution and/or mission statement a definition of AF as well as principles and requirements to protect it.
- Adopt formalized procedures and/or protocols to guide the association's response to cases of potential threats, attacks, and limitations on AF and for addressing risks to AF and granting protection of individuals.
- Include in annual reports an assessment of risks to academic freedoms and how these are being addressed.
- Have a dedicated page on their website where people can be informed about AF.
- Host regular roundtable events on AF.
- Establish a task force on academic freedoms to promote the importance of this issue on the policy and research agenda.
- Ensure the links between academic freedoms and 'self-governance and collegiality' by providing faculties the right to elect a majority representatives to academic bodies within the higher education institution.
- Monitor the mechanism(s) of accessing the profession with a view on the links between AF and equitable access.
- Provide a mechanism for (confidential) reporting and complaints on infringement of academic freedoms to a designated individual.
- Establish mechanisms for addressing the risks to AF and granting protection of individuals.



Suggestion for formalized procedures for national political science associations regarding the monitoring of violations of the academic freedoms of political scientists

1. Each association could nominate an Academic Freedom Committee (AFC) to monitor violations of the academic freedoms of political scientists and receive notification and/or complaints by political scientists.
2. Any notification of a potential case of AF violation will be transferred to the AFC chair, who will appoint a member of the Committee to take charge of the specific case and prepare a report.
3. The Committee members, including, in particular, the member in charge of the case, will gather sufficient, relevant, and accurate information, with as much detail as possible, from different sources. The Committee will then prepare a detailed report that will include a summarized account of the facts bearing on the allegations, the nature of the alleged violations, whether a violation has in fact occurred and, finally, whether it is a violation of academic freedom.
4. The report will be submitted to the association President and governance body, who will decide on a course of action and, eventually, inform IPSA by sending information to the Academic Freedom and Ethics Committee.