

## 80.30.008 *ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY*

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### **Academic Freedom Policy**

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to define responsible academic freedom for faculty at the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences ("Graduate School"). It safeguards the rights of Graduate School faculty to pursue knowledge, engage in critical discourse, and express diverse viewpoints, all while maintaining academic integrity.

#### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to Graduate School-specific activities, conducted by faculty with an appointment to the Graduate School.

#### **STAKEHOLDERS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY**

Stakeholders affected by this policy include all Graduate School faculty engaged in Graduate School-specific teaching, scholarship, research, or administration.

#### **POLICY**

##### 1.1 Academic Freedom and Responsibility

1.1.1 Academic freedom as defined by SACSCOC, is the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge in the academic community. Academic freedom respects the dignity and rights of others while fostering intellectual freedom of faculty to teach, research, and publish. Responsible academic freedom enriches the contributions of higher education to society.

1.1.2 Persons engaged in Graduate School-specific research, dissemination of knowledge, and student advisement and advocacy possess academic freedom for Graduate School-specific activities. Any academic-related and creative activities are subject to the Graduate School policies. Graduate School faculty members who teach courses are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, maintaining awareness of the relevance of their contribution to the course or to the mission of the Graduate School. Quality education requires a climate of academic freedom and academic responsibility.

Per the American Association of University Professors (AAUP):

"Academic freedom means that faculty are free to engage in the professionally competent forms of inquiry and teaching that are necessary for the purposes of the university. It does not mean that individual faculty members are free to teach or publish whatever they want without repercussions."

1.1.3 Professional responsibility is the logical correlative of academic freedom. All members of the Graduate School academic community are responsible for conducting themselves in ways that will promote the achievement of the purposes for which academic freedom exists.

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As noted by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP):

“Academic freedom of an individual faculty member is subject to professional ethics, professional competence, and collective responsibility.”

“Faculty are expected to act ethically in their teaching, receive evaluation from their peers, and defer to the responsibility of the shared academic freedom when working collaboratively.”

### PROCEDURE

2.1 Complaints pertaining to academic freedom as defined by this policy are resolved through the procedures outlined in the Graduate Faculty Grievance Policy.

### DEFINITIONS

- **Academic freedom:** the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge in the academic community. Academic freedom respects the dignity and rights of others while fostering intellectual freedom of faculty to teach, research, and publish. Responsible academic freedom enriches the contributions of higher education to society.
- **Professional ethics:** A Graduate School faculty member must act ethically in their teaching and research (for example, by following regulations on human subject research).
- **Professional competence:** In order to produce and disseminate the highest quality of knowledge in a given field, Graduate School faculty members are evaluated in their research and teaching by their faculty colleagues.
- **Collective responsibility:** The Graduate School faculty who are responsible for a particular course of study may share responsibility for determining courses to be offered or texts to be assigned to students. The shared academic freedom to make this decision supersedes the freedom of an individual faculty member to choose a textbook that he or she alone prefers.
- **Activities:** Activities that fall under this policy are graduate school-specific. Activities at other institutions are out of scope.

### REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- Graduate Faculty Grievance Policy

### FORMS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

N/A

### POLICY DETAILS

Policy Type	Policy Revision
Policy Number	80.30.008
Policy Category	Faculty Policy
Policy Sponsor	Stacey Schultz-Cherry

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Approval Authority	Board of Trustees
Policy Effective Date:	May 10, 2024
Policy Owner (Contact Info)	Stacey Schultz-Cherry (stacey.schultz-cherry@stjude.org)
Policy Alternate	Stacey Schultz-Cherry
Last Review Date	August 8, 2025
Next Scheduled Review Date	By June 1, 2026

**REVISION HISTORY**

V1.0 – May 10, 2024  
V2.0 – August 16, 2024  
V3.0 – August 8, 2025

**APPROVALS**

Board of Trustees – Approved on May 10, 2024  
Board of Trustees – Approved on August 16, 2024  
Board of Trustees – Approved on August 8, 2025