

Harvard University

Cambridge, MA • Private School



The most comprehensive guide to free speech on campus — anywhere

Because a true university education requires freedom of expression.

The College Free Speech Rankings are based on student surveys, campus policies, and recent speech-related controversies.

OVERALL RANK

245 ▲

/257

▲ 6 FROM 2024

GRADE

F

— F FROM 2024

SPEECH CONTROVERSIES

13

4 FROM 2025

Harvard's rise came from fewer speech controversy penalties and a "high honors" bonus after President Garber publicly denied federal orders to derecognize student groups. He stated, "Freedom of thought and inquiry...has enabled universities to contribute in vital ways to a free society and to healthier, more prosperous lives."

Harvard ranks in the bottom 25 for "Comfort Expressing Ideas" and "Administrative Support," suggesting students feel uneasy voicing opinions and doubt administrative backing.

Harvard can improve by revising its speech policies to earn a "green light" Spotlight rating and formally committing to open inquiry by adopting the Chicago Statement. But policy changes alone won't rebuild trust. The university must defend student and faculty expression during controversy, clearly communicate the value of free speech, and embed expressive rights training into first-year orientation. Given its outsized influence in higher education, Harvard must demonstrate not only strong policies but a genuine, consistent commitment to free expression through its actions.

Spotlight Rating

Yellow

FIRE's Spotlight database annually rates regulations on student expression based on the extent to which they restrict free speech.

If you are a school administrator and would like to discuss your rating, reach out to speechcodes@thefire.org.

Visit our website: <https://rankings.thefire.org/> for more information.

HIGHLIGHTS



47% of students say they have self-censored on campus at least once or twice a month.



79% of students say shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.



32% of students say using violence to stop someone from speaking on campus is acceptable, at least in rare cases.

6.1:1

There are roughly 6.10 liberal students for every one conservative student.

Institutional Neutrality

ADOPTED



Chicago Statement for Free Speech

NOT ADOPTED



SCORE DEEP DIVE

COMFORT EXPRESSING IDEAS

F

▲ INCREASE

DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT

C+

▲ INCREASE

OPENNESS

C

▲ INCREASE

SELF-CENSORSHIP

D-

▲ INCREASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

F

▲ INCREASE

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

F

▲ INCREASE

SCHOLARS UNDER FIRE

2

STUDENTS UNDER FIRE

5

DEPLATFORMINGS

6