

## Academic Freedom Policy

### Introduction

Higher education institutions play an important role in society as places of debate and discussion. They are where ideas can be tested and challenged, and where critical enquiry and innovation can be advanced. One of the School's founding principles is openness to a diversity of people, ideas and methods; and we are committed to enabling an environment in which new and divergent views can be brought forward, listened to, and challenged.

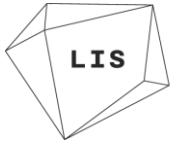
Academic freedom is fundamental to fostering an environment of debate, discussion, and new ideas. Academic freedom includes the rights of the School's academic staff to freedom of teaching and discussion; freedom in carrying out and disseminating research; freedom from institutional censorship; and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies, without fear of detriment to themselves.

This policy seeks to enshrine academic freedom at the School in compliance with the [Education Act 1986](#) (Section 43); the [Education Reform Act 1988](#); the [Human Rights Act 1998](#); the [Equality Act 2010](#); the [Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015](#) (S.31) and the [Higher Education and Research Act 2017](#); as well as in compliance with legislation that protects civic and academic freedoms, in accordance with UNESCO's 1997 [Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel](#). It also seeks alignment with the [Office for Students' public interest governance principles](#), and the [University and College Union Statement on Academic Freedom](#).

### Policies

The School shall uphold academic freedom by protecting the rights of its academic staff through this policy and associated procedures. Academic freedom at the level of individual academic staff as set out in this policy includes the rights to:

- Freedom to teach without interference, provided that their teaching is in line with the validated curriculum and agreed delivery approach of the Learning team, as well as in line with accepted professional principles, including professional responsibility and intellectual rigour of methods and standards.
- Freedom from being forced to instruct against their own best knowledge or conscience, or from being forced to use curricula or methods that are contrary to national or international human rights standards.
- Freedom to conduct and publish scholarship without commercial or political interference that would undermine the academic integrity of the research.
- Freedom from institutional censorship, including the right to express their opinion about the institution or education system in which they work, where they have concerns about academic standards or the quality of student learning opportunities. Exceptions would apply where such opinions are vexatious and seek to maliciously damage the School's reputation and/or its reputation with students and/or professional, statutory or regulatory bodies.



- Freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves at risk of losing their jobs or privileges.
- Freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies, including trade unions.

Academic freedom requires the development of open, collegial forms of institutional governance. It requires academic staff to play a pre-eminent role in determining the programme and assessment standards. This is upheld at the School by the provision that the Academic Council, which oversees the management of the School's academic affairs and the approval of the School's programme, assessment framework and pedagogic methods, is primarily made up of internal School academic staff. The Academic Council will also periodically consult all academic staff on the development of the School's programme and assessment framework, for example through the Annual Programme Monitoring Procedure.

The School's commitment to collegiality, articulated in its [Dignity at Work and Study Policy and Procedure](#), supports an environment in which members of academic staff feel free to have their voices heard without fear of harassment, bullying or intimidation.

The School's [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#) aims to ensure that its academic staff and students have the freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom and put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges.

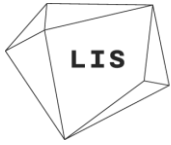
The School's [Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure](#) ensures that all staff and students at the School have access to proper whistleblowing procedures.

## Restrictions

The School's commitment to academic freedom is not absolute or unconditional. Academic freedom comes with the responsibility to respect the democratic rights and freedoms of others. Namely, all School staff (as well as all School students and visitors) shall refrain from all forms of harassment, prejudice and unfair discrimination, whether on the grounds of sex, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, colour, class, caring responsibilities, marital status, gender, sexuality, disability, age or other status or personal characteristic. Further details are set out in the School's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) and its [Dignity at Work and Study Policy and Procedure](#).

The School also expects its staff to express their views in the appropriate fora, in ways that are clear, relevant, respectful, accurate and timely; they should endeavour to justify their views with evidence, facts or reasonable argument, and should make every reasonable effort to present their views in a constructive and sensitive manner. Further details are set out in the School's [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#).

There are circumstances in which the School might restrict academic freedom in order to protect the welfare of others or to discharge its legislative requirements. These include circumstances where restrictions are necessary in order for the School to:



- Discharge its obligations under the [Education \(No.2\) Act 1986](#), [The Education Reform Act 1988](#), the [Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015](#), and the [Higher Education and Research Act 2017](#); or
- Safeguard the safety, health and welfare of its registered students, employees and others lawfully upon School premises or engaged in activities associated with the School, including giving effect to the safeguards set out in the [Equality Act 2010](#).

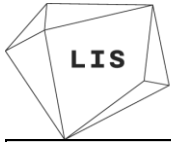
Failure by a School employee to comply with the provisions of this policy may result in disciplinary proceedings under the School's Disciplinary Procedures; these are set out in the Staff Handbook.

### **Enforcement and Review**

The School shall ensure that associated strategies, policies and procedures support the Academic Freedom Policy. These shall include but are not limited to:

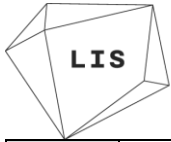
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy;
- Staff Recruitment, Training and Development Plan;
- Staff Handbook;
- [Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#)
- [Dignity at Work and Study Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)

The Director of Teaching and Learning will annually review this policy and its effectiveness and recommend any changes to be authorised by the Academic Council. The Academic Council may authorise any changes to this Policy at its discretion at any time.



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| <b>Document owner:</b>   | Hannah Kohler, Director of Admissions and Student Support  |
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| <b>Reviewed by:</b>  | Dr Andrew Redford (Head of Quality)  |
| <b>Audited by:</b>   | Board of Directors<br>Academic Council   |
| <b>Date of Audit:</b>  | 07/2019 (BoD) - approved<br>12/2019, 03/2020 (AC) - approved   |
| <b>Date of next review:</b><br>(annually unless otherwise agreed)  |  |
| <b>Related documents:</b><br>(e.g. associated forms, underpinning processes, related policies or overarching policies) | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy<br>Dignity at Work and Study Policy and Procedure<br>Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure<br>Staff Handbook<br>Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech |

| <b>Version Control</b> |  |             |  |
|------------------------|--|-------------|--|
| <b>Version</b>         | <b>Author</b>  | <b>Date</b> | <b>Brief summary of changes</b>                  |
| 1                      | Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support) | 20/02/2019  | Original draft                                   |
| 2                      | Jasper Joyce (Director of Finance and Operations)          | 13/03/2019  | Adjustments to wording                           |
| 3                      | Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support) | 10/06/2019  | Clarified links to other policies and procedures |
| 4                      | Prof. Chris Maguire (Registrar)                            | 14/06/2019  | Included details on monitoring and review        |
| 5                      | Prof. Carl Gombrich (Director of Teaching and Learning)    | 17/06/2019  | Wording changes to introduction                  |
| 6                      | Board of Directors   | 12/07/2019  | Approved   |



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|---|--|------------|---|
| 7 | Academic Council   | 18/12/2019 | Approved, but requires update as part of update of package of general academic regulations in light of decision to pursue NDAPs |
| 8 | Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support) | 04/01/2020 | Minor wording changes   |
| 9 | Academic Council   | 16/03/2020 | Approved  |