

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 means the freedom of academic staff, within the law, to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves at risk of being adversely affected in any of the following ways (a) loss of their jobs or privileges at the provider; or (b) the likelihood of their securing promotion or different jobs at the provider being reduced.

This policy seeks to enshrine academic freedom at the School in compliance with its legal obligations including under the [Higher Education and Research Act 2017](#) as amended by the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023; the [Human Rights Act 1998](#); the [Equality Act 2010](#); and the [Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015](#).

Policies

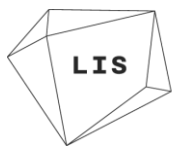
The School shall uphold academic freedom by protecting the rights of its academic staff through this policy and associated procedures.

Academic freedom is supported by 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 unlawful harassment.

The School's [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#) is one way that the School is taking steps to secure freedom of speech within the law for its staff. One of the aims of that policy is 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.



Further information

The School's commitment to academic freedom is not absolute or unconditional. Academic freedom comes with the responsibility to act within the law. Namely, all School staff (as well as all School students and visitors) shall refrain from all forms of unlawful harassment, and unlawful discrimination, whether on the grounds of sex, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender reassignment, sexuality, disability, or age. 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 discharge its legislative requirements, including under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, and the Equality Act 2010, and the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

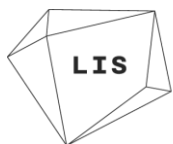
Failure by a School employee to comply with the provisions of this policy may result in disciplinary proceedings under the School's Disciplinary Procedures; these are set out in the Staff Handbook.

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 Registrar 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. Nothing in this Policy, or the associated policies listed above, shall be construed as undermining the School's commitment to take reasonably practicable steps to secure freedom of expression and academic freedom within the law.



Name of policy/procedure:	Academic Freedom Policy
Document owner:	Andrew Redford, Registrar
Date Originally Created:	02/2019
Related documents: (e.g. associated forms, underpinning processes, related policies or overarching policies)	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Dignity at Work and Study Policy and Procedure Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure Staff Handbook Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech

Version Control			
Version	Author	Date	Brief summary of changes
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
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
10	Michael Englard, Registrar	March 2022, AC Chair's action	Minor wording changes to LIS context
11	Andrew Redford, Registrar	BoD, Chair's action July 2025	Minor updates