

Statement on Academic Freedom

Preamble

Academic Freedom is a fundamental component of the educational character of the University, for which the Board of Governors bears ultimate responsibility under the Articles of Government.

A limited definition of the function of academic freedom is contained in section 202(2)(a) of the Education Reform Act 1988, which states that function as being:

- (a) to ensure that academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions;

The University affirms that this narrow definition of respect for academic freedom is a primary value without which no university can properly function, but asserts a broader view of academic freedom than that adopted by statute.

The University therefore adopts the guiding principles on academic freedom contained within the [*Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel Adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in Paris on 11 November 1997*](#). Where there is doubt as to the meaning of academic freedom beyond its statutory context, recourse shall be had to the Recommendation as an aid to interpretation.

General Principles

This Statement of Academic Freedom is predicated upon the balance of freedoms and responsibilities articulated by the *Recommendation*. In respecting the right of the University and those of all its members to exercise academic freedom, the University requires of itself and of its members that in return all fulfil their responsibilities in exercising those freedoms.

Institutional and individual right to academic freedom

The University asserts its freedom to shape its own educational character and academic purpose, and to determine for itself, within the law:

- who may teach, research and engage in scholarly activity;
- what is taught, researched and the subject of scholarly enquiry;
- how teaching, research and scholarly activity should be conducted; and
- who may be admitted to study or undertake research.

The University will take all necessary measures to safeguard the academic freedom of staff undertaking academic activities; that is to say, freedom of teaching, learning, discussion and enquiry; freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof; freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies.

Freedoms of staff undertaking academic activities

The University shall maintain the freedom of staff undertaking academic activities, as appropriate to their terms and conditions of employment:

- to fulfil their functions without discrimination of any kind;
- to teach without interference, subject to accepted professional principles including professional responsibility and intellectual rigour with regard to standards and methods of teaching;
- to carry out research without any interference, or any suppression, in accordance with their professional responsibility and subject to nationally and internationally recognized professional principles of intellectual rigour, scientific inquiry and research ethics; and
- to publish and communicate the conclusions of the research of which they are authors or co-authors.

Responsibilities of staff undertaking academic activities

Staff undertaking academic activities should recognise that the exercise of freedoms carries with it responsibilities, including the obligation to respect the academic freedom of other members of the academic community and to ensure the fair discussion of contrary views.

Academic freedom also carries with it the duty to use that freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base research on an honest search for truth and new knowledge. Teaching, research and scholarly activity should be conducted in full accordance with ethical and accepted professional standards.