

Institution	Universal Higher Education (UHE)
Policy name	Academic Freedom Policy
Policy Governance	Academic Board

Summary

UHE recognises freedom of inquiry by academic staff and students as fundamental to the values of the college as well as the principles of academia.

UHE recognises that scholars should have freedom to teach or communicate ideas or facts, and provide opinion without being targeted for job loss, or disadvantaged in employment.

This policy outlines the commitment of UHE in respecting academic freedom as defined in Standard B1.1.2. of the Higher Education Standards Framework (2015) as commitment to and support for free intellectual inquiry and as *Academic Freedom* is stated as one of the values in UHE's Strategic Plan.

UHE recognises and values the right to academic freedom as central to its endeavours in scholarship and teaching and is committed to its promotion within UHE. It supports the right of its academics to engage in critical inquiry, debate and promotes a diversity of opinion and the right to express freely.

This policy does not permit any staff-member or student to engage in behaviour or speech or any form of communication proscribed under the laws of Victoria regarding hate-speech or discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, ability, or religious belief.

Academic freedom

Academic Freedom pertains to any form of expression (including communication and performance).

Academic freedom includes the rights of all academic staff and students to:

- exercise academic freedom without fear of harassment, bullying or unfair treatment.
- speak, write, and publish without being subject to UHE sanction.
- hold and express opinions on a range of issues.
- participate, in a personal capacity, in public debates about political and social issues.
- participate, in a personal capacity, in professional and representative bodies to engage in community service without fear of harassment, intimidation or unfair treatment.
- express controversial views, although this does not mean the right to harass intimidate other persons.

Academic staff and students are expected to exercise academic freedom in a manner that is consistent with a responsible search for knowledge and its dissemination.

Academic freedom of expression does not extend to behaviour that is illegal.

In the exercise of academic freedom, staff and students will act in a professional and ethical manner and will not harass, vilify, intimidate, or defame others.

Furthermore, in exercising their freedom to carry out teaching and research, academic staff have a responsibility to conduct it in accordance with the principles of intellectual rigour without any interference or suppression.

Responsibilities of staff

Academic freedom does not denote the freedom to neglect the basic obligations of the employer-employee relationship. Academic staff and students may hold views and express them freely on all topics, even outside their expertise whilst identifying themselves as members of UHE.

However, in exercising academic freedom, academic staff and students who communicate ideas publicly on topics outside their area of expertise should be conscious of whether it is reasonable, in the circumstances, to link their comments to their association with UHE. Both the UHE and the scholar have an obligation to enhance the value of academic freedom to society.

Monitoring academic freedom

The Chief Academic Officer will monitor any complaints or grievances related to academic freedom. Where a case needs to be discussed, the Chief Academic Officer will seek advice from the Chair of Academic Board.

Complaints and appeals

If a staff member or student feels their academic freedom has been obstructed by UHE they may seek redress in the first-instance through discussion and mediation with their supervisor.

If unresolved at local level, the complaint may be escalated in writing to formal hearing by the Chief Academic Officer as Chair of an ad-hoc panel consisting of not less than 3 staff members and one student representative that must be formed by the CAO within 14 days or receipt and where the complainant is allowed to make their case.

The range of remedies decided by the CAO are to be appropriate to the type and degree of complaint raised and can include the provision of a letter of support or confirmation, and in disciplinary cases could involve counselling, mitigation for any harm caused, and in extreme cases consideration of enrolment or employment status.

In any conversation or hearing, a complainant is entitled to be accompanied by a support person.