

ACADEMIC FREEDOM, INTEGRITY AND FREE INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY POLICY

1. Overview

As academic freedom and free intellectual inquiry and expression are the cornerstone of critical inquiry and the defining characteristics of a higher education institute, the Higher Education Leadership Institute (“the Institute”) is committed to the promotion of these interlinking concepts. This commitment also reflects the intent of Standard 6.1.4 of the *Standards for Higher Education*¹.

The overarching statement of this commitment lies within the Company Constitution which states that the Institute “is committed to support academic integrity and free intellectual inquiry in all its academic endeavours”. Furthermore, a key function of the Academic Board, as espoused in its terms of reference, is to “facilitate free intellectual inquiry and ensure academic integrity”. These overarching commitments are embedded in the Institute’s *Academic Plan*.

2. Commitment to scholarship and academic integrity

The Institute expects its academic and where relevant, its professional staff to exhibit a strong commitment to scholarship and the professional expectations of their academic disciplines and commitment to improved practice. The pursuit of knowledge through intellectual inquiry is highly valued as a mark of institutional excellence². To support this pursuit of knowledge the Institute makes the commitment that its academic staff will have freedom of inquiry without fear of repression.

In the pursuit of knowledge academic integrity is essential to the fabric of an academic community, embracing managers, researchers, educators and students³ alike. Therefore, when staff undertake any intellectual inquiry it is important that they are cognisant of their responsibility to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity.

The Institute takes a serious view of academic misconduct and will penalise staff who are found guilty of offences associated with misappropriation of others’ work,

¹ Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021, <
<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2021L00488>>

² Refer to the Institute’s *Scholarly Activity Policy and Procedure (QAF060)* for more detail.

³ In regards to academic integrity and students, reference should be made to the Institute’s *Student Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy and Procedure (QAF070)*.

misrepresentation of personal performance and fraud, improper access to scholarly resources and obstructing others in pursuit of their academic endeavours.

Details of how instances of staff academic misconduct are handled is contained in the Staff Induction program and associated *Staff Handbook*, section 5.

3. Respect for academic freedom

Academic freedom and its related responsibilities as recognised and practised by the Institute have their fundamental basis in the culture commonly found in Australian universities and other higher education providers. Specifically, academic staff and students are entitled to full freedom without unreasonable restriction in any scholarly activity they pursue in order to encourage scholarly inquiry. Furthermore, academic staff are entitled to freedom in the teaching environment to discuss the subject they are delivering. However, they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which is outside of their areas of expertise and that has no relevance to the content of the subject.

The concept of academic freedom includes:

- the freedom of academic staff to teach, discuss, and research and to disseminate and publish the results of their research without restriction by established scholarly consensus or institutional policy, but subject to scholarly standards;
- the freedom of academic staff and students to engage in intellectual inquiry, to express their opinions and beliefs, and to contribute to public debate, in relation to their areas of expertise;
- the freedom of academic staff and students to express their opinions in relation to the higher education provider in which they work or are enrolled free from institutional censorship or sanction;
- the freedom of academic staff and students to make lawful public comment on any issue in their personal capacities, not speaking on behalf of the Institute or as an officer of the Institute;
- the freedom of academic staff to participate in professional or representative academic bodies; and
- the freedom of students to participate in student societies and associations⁴.

⁴ From the Model Code in the report by Mr Robert French into freedom of speech in Australian higher education providers (March 2019): <https://www.dese.gov.au/higher-education-reviews-and-consultations/independent-review-adoption-model-code-freedom-speech-and-academic-freedom>

As noted above, when speaking or writing as private citizens, academic staff are free from institutional censorship or discipline. However, academic staff should keep in mind that as scholars the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Therefore, they should at all times demonstrate academic and scholarly rigour to ensure accuracy, should exercise appropriate restraint when commenting on matters outside of their areas of expertise, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the Institute, unless expressly authorised to do so.

Academic staff will refrain from using their institutional affiliation when publicly expressing an opinion on topics outside their area of expertise and/or on contentious issues where personal opinion may deviate from the Institute’s published position. When staff wish to speak or write on behalf of the Institute in their area of expertise they must seek written approval from the CEO in advance.

The Institute will ensure that students and staff have a reasonable expectation that their right to hold values of their own choosing will be respected even when those values are being questioned. Academic freedom carries associated responsibilities to exercise professional care and competence in the conduct of teaching and research, to subject academic work to the critical scrutiny of others, to consider the impact that one’s work may have on others, and not to impinge on the ability of others to engage freely in teaching and learning, research, and academic debate.

4. Version history

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Details
1.0	Academic Board	20 February 2016	Document creation and initial approval
1.1	Academic Board	20 July 2016	Minor grammatical changes to policy
1.2	Dean	23 September 2016	To incorporate nomenclature of “educator”
1.3	Dean	24 April 2018	To incorporate cross-reference to Staff Induction and Staff Handbook
2.0	Academic Board	26 November 2019	To incorporate recommendations from the French Review
2.1	Dean	12 November 2021	Update to HESF2021 and other minor changes

Document owner: Dean