

Academic Freedom Policy

Version number	1
Approved by	Academic Board
Date of approval	25/10/2017

Purpose

Core to the overarching purpose of the Sydney Institute of Higher Education (SI) is building an environment in which staff and students are free to engage in intellectual inquiry, academic research, and critical inquiry. SI considers this environment to be crucial to maintaining academic integrity, as it enables staff and students to express themselves honestly and pursue new knowledge frontiers.

The *Academic Freedom Policy* establishes SI's commitment to promoting and protecting academic freedom, outlines what SI considers to be acceptable and protected under this policy, and sets out measures to create a learning and teaching environment in which staff and students enjoy academic freedom.

Scope

This *Academic Freedom Policy* applies to all academic staff and current students of SI. It applies to academic speech or expression by SI staff and students both on and off the SI campus in respect to their employment or studentship respectively.

This policy is not relevant to the private speech of employees or students, or public speech on non-academic matters.

This policy does not offer staff or students protection for any speech or expression that is illegal under Australian federal and state laws. Additionally, this policy does not protect any forms of speech or expression that contravene SI's *Staff Wellbeing Policy*, *Anti-Discrimination Policy*, or *Misconduct Policy*.

Principles

SI recognises academic freedom as essential to the purpose of providing education, to maintaining academic integrity, and to contributing to the development of new knowledge. SI will thus ensure that the academic freedom of staff and students in teaching, learning and research is promoted and protected.

'Academic freedom' is not to be conflated with 'freedom of speech' or "freedom to do anything'. Academic freedom is understood by SI to be the right to research, discuss, comment on, and disseminate knowledge and ideas with the intent to develop further knowledge, without censure or undue influence from others.

Academic speech or expression must be based on evidence and critical inquiry, adhering to sound academic practice as per the *Academic and Professional Integrity Policy*.

SI staff and students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all times, and especially when their conduct will reflect on SI's reputation.

Procedures

Learning and teaching environment

SI aspires to create an environment in which the academic freedom of each staff member and student is protected.

SI's commitment to and support for free intellectual inquiry will be embedded in all areas of academic operations, including:

- Development of the *Learning and Teaching Plan*
- Program design and delivery
- Expectations for academic integrity and proper conduct
- Handling of student complaints and appeals
- Assessment strategies.

Rights and Responsibilities

Staff and students have the following rights and responsibilities:

- Staff and students are expected not to interrupt or disrupt the academic activities of others unless those activities contravene an SI policy, an SI code of conduct, or Australian federal or state law.
- Staff and students have the right to appeal decisions made about their academic speech or expression through the appropriate appeal pathways.
- Staff members have the right to comment publicly on academic matters within their area of expertise.

SI has the following rights and responsibilities:

- SI will ensure that the academic freedom of staff and students is not hindered by corporate or business interests.
- To the best of its ability, SI will protect staff and students from any negative effects resulting from exercising academic freedom as defined in this policy.
- SI will ensure that staff and students are informed about academic freedom and their rights and responsibilities under this policy through orientation, induction, and ongoing development activities.
- SI has the right to pass judgement on whether academic activities are consistent with the definition of academic freedom outlined in this policy.

Policy Implementation and Monitoring

Academic freedom is fundamental to SI across all aspects of the higher education operation. It is the responsibility of the *Corporate Governance Board* to ensure academic freedom is protected at SI under this policy.

The *Corporate Governance Board* delegates oversight of academic matters at SI to the *Academic Board*. The Academic Board delegates responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this policy to the Dean.

The *Academic Board* will review all periodic reports from relevant committees and staff members, in accordance with the *Compliance Calendar*.

Additionally, the *Academic Board* will review all relevant student complaints, concerns raised by staff members, potential threats to academic freedom, and instances of alleged student or staff academic misconduct on an ongoing basis.

Definitions

Academic Board: the SI governing body responsible for academic oversight, including SI learning and teaching environment and practices, program development and approval, workforce planning, research and scholarship, and academic policies and procedures. The *Academic Board* advises the *Corporate Governance Board* on academic matters.

Academic freedom: The right of students and staff to engage in free intellectual inquiry in a manner that upholds academic integrity. This includes engaging in reasoned and evidence-based researching, commenting and debating on their areas of expertise.

Academic integrity: the standards and values that must be embedded in all academic activities, such as accountability, fairness, honesty, and respect.

Corporate Governance Board: The SI governing body responsible for the oversight of all SI operations, including the direction-setting, quality assurance, monitoring, and improvement of academic and non-academic operations. It delegates responsibility for academic matters to the *Academic Board*.

Critical inquiry: An approach to research and analysis that considers multiple conflicting perspectives, producing balanced and well-reasoned work that challenges existing ideas and uncovers new areas of inquiry.

Review Schedule

This policy will be reviewed by the *Academic Board* every three years.

Version History				
Version number:	Approved by:	Approval date:	Revision notes:	Next review date:

1	Academic Board	25/10/2017	.	16 / 10 / 2022
2				

▲ Related documents

↗ Academic Freedom Policy
↗ Academic and Professional Integrity Policy
↗ Misconduct Policy
↗ Anti-Discrimination Policy
↗ Assessment Policy
↗ Program Development and Approval Policy
↗ Staff Wellbeing Policy
↗ Learning and Teaching Plan
↗ Corporate Governance Board - Terms of Reference
↗ Academic Board - Terms of Reference

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