

Academic Freedom Policy

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Purpose

The Australia Institute of Future Education (**AIFE**) undertakes to maintain freedom of speech and academic freedom in accordance with Standard 6.1.4 of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*.

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- All AIFE staff (full-time, part-time, casual)
- All enrolled students
- All visitors (e.g. invited speakers), and
- Members of AIFE's governing bodies.

Policy

Statement

The right to freedom of speech and academic freedom is central to teaching, learning and scholarship. Therefore, AIFE is committed to upholding and protecting this right.

Academic freedom at AIFE comprises the following elements:

- The freedom of academic staff to teach, discuss, and research and to disseminate and publish the results of their research
- 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 subjects of study and research
- 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
- The freedom of academic staff to participate in professional or representative academic bodies
- The freedom of students to participate in student societies and associations
- The autonomy of the higher education provider in relation to the choice of academic courses and offerings, the ways in which they are taught and the choices of research activities and the ways in which they are conducted.

However, the right to freedom of speech and academic freedom is restricted only to the extent that the action:

- Is prohibited by law of the country and/or
- Interferes with the right and freedom of others to express themselves and to hear and receive information and opinions.

Principles

The following principles will guide AIFE in maintaining an environment where the right to freedom of speech and academic freedom is respected and upheld:

- All academic staff and students have the right to freedom of speech and academic freedom without fear of harassment, bullying, intimidation or unfair treatment.
- The exercise of academic freedom by any member of staff or student, subject to the above limitations, does not constitute misconduct nor attract any penalty or adverse action.
- By recognising, promoting and supporting the right to freedom of speech and academic freedom, AIFE should not be taken to endorse particular views expressed by academic staff. The views expressed by academic staff are their own even where an affiliation with AIFE is indicated.
- In exercising a right to freedom of speech and academic freedom, staff and students will observe all relevant codes of conduct and other AIFE policies, act in an ethical manner and will not defame, slander, harass, vilify, bully or intimidate any member of the AIFE community. Freedom of speech and academic freedom is not a defence for acting unlawfully or for poor behaviour or for disrespectful treatment of others.

Breach of the Policy

Any breach of this Policy will be investigated in accordance with the respective codes of conduct.

Monitoring and Improvement

The Board of Directors (**BoD**), through the Academic Board, will receive regular reports on matters relating to academic freedom, as appropriate.

Any serious incident relating to the exercise of academic freedom will be reported by the Dean to the Academic Board, which may refer the incident to the BoD.

Responsibilities

All staff and students are to:

- Ensure their behaviour and conduct always reflect the standards of any code of conduct developed by AIFE, and the Principles outlined in this Policy, and
- Follow AIFE's reasonable and proportionate directions as necessary to safeguard the health, wellbeing and safety of other students and AIFE's staff.

The Dean will:

- On the BoD's behalf, ensure all AIFE's activities reflect the principles outlined in this Policy
- Review AIFE's policy framework, including the delegations schedule, to ensure that the framework enables and do not interfere with, the right to freedom of speech and academic freedom, and
- implement any strategies developed and approved by the BoD to safeguard and promote academic freedom at AIFE.

Definitions

There are no definitions in this policy.

Version history

| Version # | Changes | Approval Body | Approval Date |
|-----------|------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1.0 | New Policy | Board of Directors | 28 February 2022 |

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Additional Information

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| Policy Status | Approved |
| Policy Owner | Dean |
| Next Review Date | 3 years from Approval Date |
| Related Internal Documents | No related internal documents |
| Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2022 | Standard 6.1.4 and Criterion B1.1.1 |
| Other legislative or regulatory instruments | Higher Education Support Act 2003 |