



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE  
OF HIGHER EDUCATION

## Academic Freedom Policy

<b>Policy Category</b>	Academic
<b>Policy Code</b>	ACA-HE-15
<b>Policy owner</b>	Dean
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Dean
<b>Approving authority</b>	Academic Board
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Registrar
<b>Approval date</b>	30 November 2022
<b>Commencement date</b>	30 November 2022
<b>Review date</b>	3 years
<b>Version</b>	2022.2
<b>Related Documents</b>	Staff Code of Conduct Student Code of Conduct Professional Academic Misconduct Policy
<b>HESF (Threshold Standards) 2021</b>	6.1.4

### 1. Purpose

This Policy seeks to address the commitment of the Australian Institute of Higher Education Pty Ltd ('the Institute') in its Mission and Goals to "advance knowledge and understanding through a commitment to free intellectual enquiry and scholarship", as well as the key function of the Academic Board to "facilitate free intellectual enquiry and ensure academic integrity".

### 2. Principles

The key principles informing this Policy and associated Procedure are:

- that academic freedom and free intellectual enquiry are the cornerstones of critical enquiry, and the Institute is committed to the promotion of these interlinking concepts;
- that academic freedom is recognised and practiced by the Institute as having a fundamental basis in the culture commonly found in Australian universities and other higher education providers; and
- that academic freedom carries associated responsibilities.

### 3. Context

This Policy has been developed to foster and encourage the pursuit of knowledge through intellectual enquiry, which is highly valued as a mark of institutional excellence. The Institute

expects its academic staff to exhibit a strong commitment to scholarship and the professional expectations of their academic disciplines.

#### **4. Scope**

This Policy applies to all students at the Institute and all academic staff, including sessional/casual staff.

#### **5. Definitions**

See the AIH Glossary of Terms for definitions.

#### **6. Policy Details**

##### **6.1 Academic Freedom**

Academic staff and students are entitled to full freedom in any scholarly activity they pursue within their academic discipline. Furthermore, academic staff are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing the unit of study they are delivering, subject to the constraints of their professional responsibilities and within the context of academic integrity. Students and staff must have a reasonable expectation that their right to hold values of their own choosing will be respected even when those values are being questioned.

##### **6.2 Academic Responsibilities**

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. Academic staff should also be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to the unit. Note that abuse of academic freedoms and rights could result in investigation and penalty under the Staff Code of Conduct, Student Code of Conduct or the Professional Academic Misconduct Policy.

##### **6.3 Engaging in public debate as private citizens**

When speaking or writing as private citizens, academic staff should be 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 rigor to ensure accuracy, exercise appropriate restraint, show respect for the opinions of others, and make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the Institute. Academic staff should refrain from using their academic titles 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 rules and regulations.

## 7. Legislation

This Policy and the associated Procedure comply with Higher Education Standards Framework standard 6.1 (Corporate Governance), which states:

### 7.1 The Governing Body

The governing body takes steps to develop and maintain an institutional environment in which freedom of speech and academic freedom are upheld and protected, students and staff are treated equitably, the wellbeing of students and staff is fostered, informed decision making by students is supported and students have opportunities to participate in the deliberative and decision-making processes of the higher education provider.

## 8. Version Control

This Policy has been endorsed by the Australia Institute of Higher Education Academic Board as at November 2022 and is reviewed every 3 years. The Policy is published and available on the Australian Institute of Higher Education website <http://www.aih.nsw.edu.au/> under 'Policies and Procedures'.

<b>Change and Version Control</b>				
<b>Version</b>	<b>Authored by</b>	<b>Brief Description of the changes</b>	<b>Date Approved:</b>	<b>Effective Date:</b>
2016-2	Registrar	Updated template.	6 July 2016	6 August 2016
2017-1	Ms. McCoy	Revised and edited content Renamed policy Restructured document; added table at beginning Added section on consequences	22 February 2017	6 March 2017
2020.1	Dean	Amended titles	24 September 2020	25 September 2020
2022.1	Registrar	Updated Higher Education Standards Framework [Threshold Standard] 2021	25 May 2022	26 May 2022
2022.2	Program Managers	Minor grammatical updates and minor updates to wording within the policy document	30 November 2022	30 November 2022