



Academic Freedom Policy

Academic Freedom Policy
Sponsor: Vice-Rector (Academic)
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Version	Date Approved	Author / Owner Approving Authority	Summary of Changes	Next Review Date
1.0	01/01/2021	Vice-Rector	Initial Release	01/01/2022
2.0	01/01/2022	Vice-Rector	Minor Edits	01/01/2023
3.0	01/01/2023	Vice-Rector	Minor Edits	01/01/2024
4.0	01/01/2024	Vice-Rector (Academic affairs)	Sponsor Change, Minor Edits	01/01/2025
5.0	01/01/2025	Vice-Rector (Academic)	Sponsor title Change, Minor Edits	01/01/2026
6.0	01/01/2026	Vice-Rector (Academic)	No changes.	01/01/2027

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1 Context

1.1 This policy sets out MLA College's approach to academic freedom, as an important value central to its status as a place of learning. This policy applies to all staff and students of the College, including contracted tutors and lecturers, regardless of their location within the UK or internationally and whether they are communicating verbally or online.

2. Definition of Academic Freedom

2.1 Academic freedom is the freedom for staff and students, acting within the law of England and Wales, to question and test accepted ideas and theories, to advance new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without fear of legal or disciplinary action.

3. Key Principles

3.1 MLA College is a teaching and learning institution in which scholarly activity is supported to ensure that the appropriate level of academic standards are maintained and enhanced.

3.2 Within and consistent with the College's strategies, policies and terms and conditions of employment and/or enrolment, the University supports and protects:

- Freedom in teaching and discussion;
- Freedom in publishing and carrying out research;
- Freedom of expression;
- Freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies.

4. Responsibilities of Staff and Students

4.1 Academic freedom is qualified to the extent that it must co-exist with the College's other values, strategies, policies and terms and conditions. In the exercise of academic freedom, the College expects its staff and students to be mindful of the following responsibilities:

- To keep an open mind at all times;
- To ensure academic debate is conducted through rational enquiry and supported by demonstrable evidence;
- To comply with the College's Ethics Policy and related procedures when conducting research;
- To recognise and articulate clearly where personal belief impinges upon academic debate and judgement;
- To express dissent in a way that is not injurious to others or to the reputation of the College or disruptive to teaching and discussion;
- To refrain from all forms of discrimination whether on grounds of gender, racial background, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious belief, marital status, caring responsibilities or any other personal characteristics;

- To be sensitive to the personal beliefs, cultural attitudes and opinions of others, and not to cause unnecessary distress in the expression of contrary ideas and opinions;
- Not to attempt to impose a set of beliefs on others;
- Not to encourage or incite extremist views where these are deemed likely to draw people into terrorism;
- To listen and take account of views and arguments which challenge those personally or institutionally held;
- To ensure that professional or academic activities do not conflict with the law or with the College's policies and procedures;
- To obtain approval from the College Academic Board to publish academic research in the College's name;
- If communicating in public, staff and students should indicate clearly that they are not communicating on behalf of the College, unless expressly authorised to do so.

4.2 Staff or students who infringe these responsibilities, including by bringing the College into disrepute, may be subject to College disciplinary procedures or other policies and procedures as appropriate.

5. Reporting any breach of this Policy

5.1 Staff breaches of this policy should be reported to MLA College's Rector or a member of the Board of Directors, as appropriate.

5.2 When sending a report of a suspected breach anonymously, the sender should provide as much detail as possible regarding the breach or suspected breach so that an investigation can be completed.

5.3 All reports of breaches or suspected breaches will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with MLA College's need to conduct an adequate investigation.

5.4 Neither MLA College nor any director, officer, contractor or employee of MLA College will engage in any form of retaliation against any director, officer, contractor or employee because he or she has reported a suspected breach in good faith.

5.5 Any director, officer, contractor or employee who engages in any form of retaliation against someone who has reported a breach or suspected breach in good faith is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, if relevant.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

6.1 It is the responsibility of the College Academic Board to ensure that this policy is implemented effectively, as part of its oversight of the maintenance of appropriate academic quality and standards.