

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH POLICY

Version:	Approved by:				Approval Date:		Effective Date:		Next Review:	
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Policy Custodian:	UOWC General Manager						Document No:		POL-UOWC-11	
Purpose:	UOW College Australia (“the College”) is dedicated to maintaining an environment where academic freedom and freedom of speech are fundamental values. The College is committed to the principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech - viewing them as essential to the pursuit of knowledge and the fostering of open and critical inquiry. These principles are integral to the College's mission of teaching and learning, ensuring that knowledge can be pursued and shared openly and respectfully. This Policy outlines the commitment of the College to uphold these principles									
Scope:	UOWGE		UOWCA	✓	UOWD		UOWCHK		UOWMKDU	
	This Policy applies to only UOWCA Australia: a) Teachers, trainers, and staff members of the College; b) Students of the College including student representative bodies; c) Members and Directors of governing bodies including the UOW College Board, Academic Board, and Education Committee; and d) Invited visiting speakers, external visiting speakers, and others attending activities of the College, or performing activities for the College, including contractors, visitors, adjunct staff, Homestay families, and volunteers. This Policy does not apply to those acting in a personal capacity i.e. where they are not representing the College or engaged in an activity in relation to.									
Related Documents:	Academic Integrity and Student Conduct Policy									

	Campus Access and Order Rules Code of Conduct Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy Global Grievance Policy IT Acceptable Use Policy Performance Management & Disciplinary Action Policy UOW College Teachers Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
References and Legislation:	<i>Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)</i> <i>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</i> <i>Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth)</i> <i>National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Outcome Standards for RTOs) Instrument 2025 (Cth)</i> <i>Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</i>

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1. Definitions

Word/Term/Acronym:	Definition:
Academic Freedom	The freedom of teachers and trainers to teach, discuss, and examine ideas, including those that may be controversial or challenging, without fear of restriction or censorship, subject to the law and College policies.
Cultural safety	Cultural safety refers to environments and behaviours that are spiritually, socially and emotionally safe and free from judgement or critical comparison. Cultural safety is essential for flourishing, particularly for those from minority or marginalised cultural and religious groups. By contrast, a culturally unsafe environment or practice disempowers or diminishes the cultural identity and well-being of an individual or group.
Freedom of Speech	The right of all individuals to express their views and engage in open debate, ensuring that diverse perspectives are heard and respected, subject to the law and College policies.
The College Community	Staff, students and affiliates of UOW College including third parties contracted by UOW College for the provision of educational services for UOW College courses and training packages.

2. Principles

Protection of Academic Freedom

- 2.1. The College is committed to protecting and promoting the academic freedom of its teachers and trainers. The College will ensure that they can pursue and present knowledge freely, without fear of intimidation or unfair treatment.

Encouragement of Open Dialogue

- 2.2. The College encourages open and respectful dialogue among students, staff, and external participants, recognising the value of diverse viewpoints. This includes the right to engage in intellectual inquiry, express opinions and beliefs, and contribute to public debate on academic subjects.

3. Individual Responsibility

- 3.1. Teachers and Trainers have the responsibility to create an inclusive and respectful learning environment, where students can freely express their ideas and engage in critical thinking.
- 3.2. Students are encouraged to actively participate in discussions, express their viewpoints respectfully, and engage with diverse perspectives.
- 3.3. Staff and Affiliates must support and uphold the principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech, fostering a culture of open inquiry and respect within the College.

4. Legal and Ethical Responsibility

- 4.1. The College shall have regard to this policy in carrying out its functions under any code, policy, procedure, guideline or similar instrument of the College, or delegated legislation, employment contract or industrial agreement.
- 4.2. All members of the College community must exercise their academic freedom and freedom of speech ethically and responsibly.
- 4.3. This policy does not have overriding legal effect on any statutory rule, code, policy, procedure, guideline or similar instrument of the College, or delegated legislation, employment contract or industrial agreement.
- 4.4. The exercise of these freedoms must respect the rights and dignity of others and be conducted in a manner that does not threaten the safety, cultural safety, or well-being of staff, students or other members of the College Community.
- 4.5. The exercise of these freedoms should not be unduly restricted nor unnecessarily burdened, other than by those restrictions and/or burdens imposed by legal obligations, or by any College policy designed to foster appropriate behaviours that respect the wellbeing, safety and cultural safety of staff, students and visitors of the College.
- 4.6. There may be circumstances where upholding of the principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech cannot extend interminably due to:
 1. the requirement to act within the laws prohibiting discrimination, bullying, harassment, *intimidation, vilification and defamation, such as:*
 - a. *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*
 - b. *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)*
 - c. *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)*
 2. the requirement to act within the laws protecting contracts, privacy, confidentiality and intellectual property;
 3. the responsibility to foster the wellbeing and ensure the safety of staff, students and visitors;
 4. the right to determine terms and conditions by which UOW College facilities may be used; and

5. reasonable and proportionate regulation of conduct necessary to discharge the College's teaching and training activities.
- 4.7. To ensure the ethical and responsible application of the right to exercise academic freedom and freedom of speech, the College Community should consider their obligations under all relevant UOW College (UOWC), UOW Global Enterprises (UOWGE) and UOW policies and agreements, including but not limited to:
1. Academic Integrity and Student Conduct Policy (UOWC)
 2. Campus Access and Order Rules (UOW)
 3. Code of Conduct (UOWGE)
 4. Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy (UOWGE)
 5. Global Grievance Policy (UOWGE)
 6. IT Acceptable Use Policy (UOW)
 7. Performance Management & Disciplinary Action Policy (UOWGE)
 8. The "Teacher Code of Professional Practice" outlined in the UOW College Teachers Enterprise Bargaining Agreement

5. Change History

Version	Approved By	Date Effective	Amendment
1	UOWC Ltd Board	16/09/2025	New Policy. This Policy was implemented in response to action from the Independent Review of Corporate and Academic Governance and scope includes UOWCA only.