

ACADEMIC FREEDOM, INTEGRITY AND FREE INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY POLICY

1. Overview

Academic freedom and free intellectual inquiry and expression are the cornerstone of critical inquiry and the defining characteristics of a higher education provider. In that regard, Astra Institute of Higher Education, (“the Institute”) is committed to the promotion of these interlinking concepts.

Academic freedom and free intellectual inquiry at the Institute are assured by the Academic Board, as declared in its terms of reference wherein one of the functions of the Academic Board is to “facilitate free intellectual inquiry, encourage freedom of speech, respect academic freedom and ensure academic integrity ”.¹

2. Commitment to scholarship and academic integrity

The Institute expects its academic and professional staff to exhibit a strong commitment to scholarship and the professional expectations of their academic disciplines. The pursuit of knowledge through intellectual inquiry is highly valued as a mark of institutional excellence. To support this pursuit of knowledge the Institute makes the commitment that its academic staff will have freedom of inquiry without fear of repression.

In the pursuit of knowledge, academic integrity is essential to the fabric of an academic community, embracing managers, researchers, teachers and students alike. Therefore, when staff undertake any intellectual inquiry, it is important that they are cognisant of their responsibility to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity.

The Institute takes a serious view of academic misconduct and will penalise staff who are found guilty of offences including and not limited to those associated with misappropriation of others' work, misrepresentation of personal performance and fraud, improper access to scholarly resources, malpractice in assessment of student learning and achievement, and obstructing others in pursuit of their academic endeavours.

3. Respect for academic freedom

Academic freedom and its related responsibilities as recognised and practised by the Institute have their fundamental basis in the culture commonly found in Australian universities and other higher education providers and provides the strongest guarantee of the accuracy and

¹ Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021.
<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2021L00488>. 24 April 2021

objectivity of scholarship and research. Academic staff and students are entitled to full freedom without unreasonable restriction in any scholarly activity they pursue in order to encourage scholarly inquiry. Furthermore, academic staff are entitled to freedom in the teaching environment to discuss the unit they are delivering, however they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which is outside of their areas of expertise and that has no relevance to the content of the unit.

The concept of academic freedom includes:

- i. the freedom of academic staff to teach, discuss, and research and to disseminate and publish the results of their research without restriction by established scholarly consensus or institutional policy, but subject to scholarly standards;
- ii. 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 areas of expertise;
- iii. 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 free from institutional censorship or sanction;
- iv. the freedom of academic staff and students to make lawful public comment on any issue in their personal capacities, not speaking on behalf of the Institute or as an officer of the Institute.
- v. We request that users of social media use the following quote when posting publicly: *"I work for Astra Higher Education Institute but the opinions here are my own"*;
- vi. the freedom of academic staff to participate in professional or representative academic bodies; and
- vii. the freedom of students to participate in student societies and associations.

When speaking or writing as private citizens, academic staff are 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 communications.

Academic staff should at all times:

- i. demonstrate academic and scholarly rigour to ensure accuracy;
- ii. exercise appropriate restraint when commenting on matters outside of their areas of expertise;
- iii. show respect for the opinions of others; and
- iv. make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the Institute unless expressly authorised to do so.

Academic staff will refrain from using their institutional affiliation 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 published position.

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. The Institute will ensure that all students and staff have a reasonable expectation that their right to hold values of their own choosing will be respected even when those values are being questioned.

4. Definitions

Term	Definition
<i>Academic freedom</i>	<p>The following definition of academic integrity is provided by the first annual Global Colloquium of University Presidents 2005, http://www.columbia.edu/~md2221/global_colloquium.htm</p> <p>“At its simplest, academic freedom may be defined as the freedom to conduct research, teach, speak, and publish, subject to the norms and standards of scholarly inquiry, without interference or penalty, wherever the search for truth and understanding may lead”.</p>
<i>Academic integrity</i>	<p>The following definition of academic integrity is provided by the Exemplary Academic Integrity Project at the University of South Australia, https://lo.unisa.edu.au/course/view.php?id=6751</p> <p>“Academic integrity means acting with the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in learning, teaching and research. It is important for students, teachers, researchers and all staff to act in an honest way, be responsible for their actions, and show fairness in every part of their work. Staff should be role models to students. Academic integrity is important for an individual’s and the College’s reputation”.</p>

<i>Academic misconduct</i>	Any breach of the standards of academic integrity and the conventions of academic honesty.
<i>Course</i>	A structured sequence of study leading to the award of a degree, or other recognised qualification, which when successfully completed is conferred on the graduand by the Board of Directors of Astra Institute of Higher Education.
<i>(the) Institute</i>	Astra Institute of Higher Education.
<i>Unit</i>	A unit of study in a higher education course or a unit of study, module and/or unit of competency in a vocational education and training course.

5. Version history

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Details
1.0	Academic Board	14 December 2021	Document creation
1.1	Academic Board	31 May 2023	Amendment to definition of staff academic misconduct at '2. Commitment to scholarship and academic integrity'

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