

ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY

1 The University of Law's Academic Freedom Policy has been informed by the Office for Students Sector-Recognized Standards and the General Ongoing Conditions of Registration and has regard to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. These definitive reference points for all English higher education institutions set out how academic standards are established and maintained and how excellence in the quality of learning opportunities is assured.

This policy sits within The University of Law's Quality and Standards Code, which provides a suite of policies designed to safeguard the academic standards of The University of Law and to assure the quality of learning opportunities offered; this policy should therefore be read in conjunction with other relevant policies within the code.

Introduction

2 The University of Law recognises that central to this policy is the University's responsibility for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name and the quality of learning opportunities for students. This policy sets out the framework of the University's approach to Academic freedom, including the expectations, key aims and principles, procedural approach and responsibilities for the implementation, monitoring and review of the policy.

Responsibility for this policy

3 Ultimate responsibility for the development of clear and effective processes and procedures associated with the quality assurance and maintenance of standards of academic provision and overseeing their application lies with the Academic Board.

Expectation

4 The University has in place effective processes for the support of academic freedom.

Preamble

5 The University considers respect for academic freedom and its concomitant obligations as a core value central to its status as a place of learning.

6 In respecting the right of staff and students to exercise academic freedom, the University requires that they, in return, fulfil their responsibilities in exercising this right.

Definition

7 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.

Key aims and principles

8 The University is primarily a teaching and learning institution in which scholarly activity is supported to ensure that the appropriate level of academic standards is maintained and enhanced. Within and consistent with the University's strategies, policies and terms and conditions of employment and/or enrolment, the University supports and protects:

- 8.1 Freedom in teaching and discussion;
- 8.2 Freedom in publishing and carrying out research;
- 8.3 Freedom of expression;
- 8.4 Freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies, including University recognised trade unions and;
- 8.5 Freedom in carrying out their roles.

Responsibilities

9 Academic freedom is qualified to the extent that it must co-exist with the University's other core values, strategies, policies and terms and conditions of employment and/or enrolment. In the exercise of academic freedom, staff and students must be mindful of their corresponding responsibilities, namely:

- 9.1 To keep an open mind at all times;
- 9.2 To ensure academic debate is conducted through rational enquiry and supported by demonstrable evidence;
- 9.3 To comply with ethical considerations and the University's Ethics Policy and Procedures when conducting research;
- 9.4 To recognise and articulate clearly where personal belief impinges upon academic debate and judgment;

- 9.5 To express dissent in a way that is not injurious to others or to the reputation of the University or disruptive to teaching, and discussion;
- 9.6 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;
- 9.7 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;
- 9.8 Not to attempt to impose a set of beliefs on others;
- 9.9 To listen and take account of views and arguments which challenge those personally or institutionally held;
- 9.10 To ensure that professional or academic activities do not conflict with relevant national/EU or International law or the University's policy and procedures;
- 9.11 If communicating in public, staff and students should indicate clearly that they are not communicating on behalf of the University unless expressly authorised to do so;
- 9.12 To observe the University's communications policies.

Compliance

10 This policy is adopted by all individuals and bodies associated with the University (including staff, students, boards, committees and subcommittees of the University).

11 Staff or students who, by the exercise of their freedoms and responsibilities infringe paragraph 9, including by bringing the University into disrepute, may be subject to the University's policies and procedures as appropriate.

Responsibility for the provision

12 Responsibility for the effective implementation of the provision lies with the Academic Board and the University of Law Board.

Monitoring and evaluation of the provision

13 Responsibility for reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of Academic Freedom lies initially with the Academic Enhancement Committee. Formal responsibility for monitoring and evaluation lies with the Vice-Provost, Academic Enhancement.

Version history

Version	Amended by	Revision summary	Date
V1.0	Learning and Teaching Strategy working party	Initial drafting	31/05/14
V1.1	CEO	Comments	04/06/14
V1.2	VP - AGQS	Taken on-board CEO comments	09/06/14
V1.3	Director of HR	Review	10/06/14
V1.4	Chief Operations Officer and Chief Financial Officer	Review	17/06/14
V1.5	Centre Directors	Review	17/06/14
V 1.6	Executive Management Board	Approval	17/06/14
V1.7	University of Law Board	Approval	25/06/14
V1.8	Student input	Review	31/07/14
V1.9	UNITE reps	Review	31/07/14
V1.10	Proof Reader	Proofing	29/08/14
V1.11	Academic Board	Approval	16/09/14
V2.0	Vice Provost – Academic Enhancement	Review	04/05/16
V2.1	Academic Registry	Final amends	23/05/16
V3.0	Vice-Provost, Academic Enhancement.	Minor amends	29/01/18
V3.1	Registry Officer	Change to coding convention	05/03/20
V3.1	Quality Assurance Team Leader	Extension to term of approval of 1 year.	10/10/2021