



UNIVERSITY OF  
LINCOLN

## SECRETARIAT & LEGAL SERVICES

### ACADEMIC POLICY

<b>NAME OF ACADEMIC POLICY:</b>	Policy Statement on Academic Freedom
<b>PURPOSE OF POLICY AND TO WHOM IT APPLIES:</b>	To all members of the University of Lincoln.
<b>RESPONSIBLE BOARD/ COMMITTEE WITH ROUTE OF APPROVAL:</b>	Ethics Committee
<b>LEAD STAFF MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS UPDATE:</b>	Pro Vice Chancellor (University Development)
<b>PERSONS CONSULTED IN DEVELOPING POLICY:</b>	The Ethics Committee developed a position paper on Academic Freedom in 2005-06, in consultation with the Faculties and Academic Board. The policy evolved from this position paper.
<b>POLICY FINALLY APPROVED BY:</b>	Academic Board on 14 October 2009
<b>DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION:</b>	14 October 2009
<b>DETAIL OF DISSEMINATION:</b>	The new Policy was circulated to staff on 11 November 2009 for wider dissemination as appropriate. A copy is also available on the Secretariat's Portal site.
<b>PROPOSED DATE OF REVIEW</b>	September 2012
<b>SECRETARIAT OFFICER – MAIN CONTACT:</b>	Officer to the Ethics Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	11 November 2009



## Preamble

The University sees respect for academic freedom as a primary value without which no university can exist<sup>1</sup>

Its policy on academic freedom rests upon the balance between rights and responsibilities. In respecting its rights and those of all its members to exercise academic freedom, the University requires of itself and of its members that in return all fulfil their responsibilities in exercising those rights.

## Definition

Academic freedom is the freedom to pursue knowledge through rational and open enquiry and to disseminate new knowledge so acquired without restriction or interference. It is both institutional and individual.

## Institutional and individual right to academic freedom

The University asserts its freedom to shape its own educational purpose and to determine for itself who may teach, what is taught, how it should be taught, and who may be admitted to study what is taught. This freedom is to be exercised without external interference from social or cultural expectations, public opinion, or public and state bodies.

The University presumes every individual member of staff has the right to develop and express ideas openly and to pursue all lines of enquiry as suggested by their studies. This freedom is to be exercised without internal interference from others' expectations, opinion or institutional regulations, policies and procedures.

## Responsibilities

In their exercise of academic freedom, the University as a corporate body and its members as individuals must be mindful of their corresponding responsibilities. These responsibilities are:

- To keep an open mind at all times
- To ensure academic debate is conducted through rational enquiry and supported by demonstrable evidence
- To set aside, as far as possible, personal beliefs or private convictions
- To recognise and articulate clearly where personal belief impinges upon academic debate and judgement
- 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
- To listen and take account of views and arguments which challenge those personally or institutionally held
- To accept the agreed outcomes of free and dispassionate academic debate, even if these challenge or contradict previous personal beliefs

## Compliance

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<sup>1</sup> See *Framework for Professional Ethics within the University of Lincoln*

Responsibility for ensuring the independence of the University as a corporate body with regard to external organisations lies with the Board of Governors, and is implemented through the University Executive.

If the University as a corporate body agrees policies and procedures which conflict with this policy, or pursues the implementation of policies and procedures in such a way as to disregard its responsibilities under it, it will be liable to challenge via the Grievance Procedure, a Collective Dispute or the Whistle-blowing policy.

Members of staff whose exercise of their rights with regard to academic freedom disregards the corresponding responsibilities and so causes offence or distress to others, or brings the University into disrepute, will be subject to the University's conduct policies and procedures as appropriate. The policies and procedures which may be evoked are those dealing with Grievances, Bullying and Harassment and Discipline.

### **Supporting Policies**

The policy is to be seen in conjunction with the Framework for Professional Ethics (August 2008), the Position Paper on Academic Freedom (September 2006) and the Code of Practice for the Freedom of Speech (November 2008).