



IONA COLLEGE
TRINITY

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Academic Freedom Policy

Approved by the Board of Directors on 26 October 2021

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1. Purpose

This Policy outlines the commitment of Iona Trinity College of Higher Education (the College) to academic freedom in accordance with Standard 6.1.4 of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to:

- All staff (full-time, part-time, casual) at the College
- All enrolled students
- All visitors (e.g. invited speakers), and
- Members of the College's governing bodies.

3. Policy

The College recognises and values the right to academic freedom, which is central to teaching, learning and scholarship, and is committed to upholding and protecting freedom of academic expression within the College.

Freedom of academic expression at the College comprises the following elements:

- The freedom of academic staff and students to engage in intellectual inquiry, to express their opinions and beliefs, and to contribute to public debate without fear or favour
- The right to speak freely extends to making statements on political and social matters, including in relation to policies affecting higher education, and to expressing opinions concerning the college and its actions
- The freedom of academic staff to participate in professional or representative academic bodies
- The freedom of academic staff to teach, discuss and research, and to disseminate and publish the results of their research
- The freedom of students to participate in student societies and associations.

However, the right to academic freedom is restricted only to the extent that the action or speech:

- Is prohibited by law and/or
- Interferes with the right and freedom of others to express themselves and to hear and receive information and opinions.

3.1 Principles

The following principles will guide the College in maintaining an environment where academic freedom is respected and upheld:

- All academic staff and students have the right to freedom of academic expression without fear of harassment, bullying, intimidation or unfair treatment

- All academic staff and students can speak, write and publish, or perform, create and exhibit, in person or via any media, without being subject to sanction, censorship or discipline by the College.
- The exercise of academic freedom by any member of staff or student, subject to the above limitations, does not constitute misconduct nor attract any penalty or adverse action.
- By recognising, promoting and supporting the right to academic freedom, the College does not imply endorsement of particular views expressed by academic staff. The views expressed by academic staff are their own even where an affiliation with the College is indicated.
- In the exercise of academic freedom, staff and students will observe all relevant codes of conduct and other the College policies, act in an ethical manner and will not defame, slander, harass, vilify, bully or intimidate any member of the College community. Academic freedom is not a defence for acting unlawfully or for poor behaviour or for disrespectful treatment of others.

4. Breach of the Policy

The College will investigate any breach of this Policy in accordance with the respective codes of conduct.

Subject to the Principles of this Policy, the exercise of academic freedom in itself by staff or students shall not constitute misconduct or attract any penalty.

5. Monitoring and improvement

The Board of Directors (BOD), through the Academic Board, will receive:

- A quarterly report on matters relating to academic freedom, and
- An annual report on academic freedom prepared by the Principal, including recommendations for improvement and strategies relating to academic freedom.

Any serious incident relating to the exercise of academic freedom will be reported by the Principal to the Academic Board, which may refer the incident to the BOD.

6. Responsibilities

All staff and students are to:

- Ensure their behaviour and conduct always reflect the standards of any code of conduct developed by the College, and the principles of academic freedom outlined in this Policy, and
- Follow the College's reasonable and proportionate directions as necessary to safeguard the health, wellbeing and safety of other students and the College's staff.

The Principal will:

- On the BOD's behalf, ensure all the College's activities reflect the principles of academic freedom outlined in this Policy

- Review the College's policy framework, including the delegations schedule, to ensure that the framework enables and do not interfere with, the exercise of academic freedom, and
- Implement any strategies developed and approved by the BOD to safeguard and promote academic freedom at the College.

7. Version history

Version #	Changes	Approval Body	Approval Date
1.0	Original Version	Board of Directors	23/10/21

8. Additional Information

Policy Status	Approved
Policy Owner	Principal
Next Review Date	3 years from Approval Date
Associated Internal Documents	No associated internal document
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021	Standard 6.1.4 and Criterion B1.1.1
National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018	No relevant standard
Other Applicable Legislation and Instruments	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011

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