

Quality Assurance - Freedom

Freshart College recognises that freedom of speech and expression within the law has fundamental importance for universities as places of education, learning and the disinterested pursuit of truth. The College understands the need that academic staff members have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves at risk of losing their jobs or any privileges they may have at the College.

Freedom of Speech and Expression

- The College shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech and expression within the law is secured for every person.
- The College will not suppress freedom of thought and expression. However, the College has a duty to ensure, wherever practical, that such thoughts and expressions do not go beyond the articulation of points of view and do not constitute incitement to riot, insurrection, racial hatred, religious hatred, sexual harassment or other activities (beyond the right of peaceful protest) which are likely to cause a breach of the peace or public disorder or otherwise to be unlawful.
- The College shall ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that participation in College events is not denied to any individual or body of persons on any grounds connected with:
 - the beliefs or views of such individual or any member of such body; or the policy or objectives of such body.
 - All person's rights and obligations shall refrain from organizing or engaging in or otherwise being associated with any conduct (other than by lawful, reasonable and peaceful persuasion) intended to prevent the enjoyment of rights.

In terms of Equality and Human Rights the guidance notes that segregation by gender is clearly not permitted under equality law in higher education institutions' normal academic, teaching and research activities, and therefore is not permissible for most events. Gender segregation is, however, permissible during collective religious worship because it is not subject to equality law. Genuinely voluntary gender segregation does not cause disadvantage and is therefore permissible.

Practical Measures

The College should permit the use of College resources only by organisers of events, whether internal or external, who undertake to comply with all lawful instructions issued by the College in relation to the location, arrangements and conduct of such events, including adequate stewarding and moderating, chairing, monitoring, and the provision of adequate control over entry.

In cases in which it is reasonable to assume that there is a possibility of disruption at an event, the College may consult with external agencies regarding the security arrangements required.

In all circumstances, a named Principal Organiser should be identified, who is responsible for the booking and control arrangements of the event, and who will be held responsible for maintaining public order and, as far as possible, securing compliance with this Code.

Any organisers of any event held through the College shall be responsible for any costs involved in organising and holding such events and for ensuring, as far as possible, that nothing in the organisation and holding of such events infringes the law, or College regulations, in any way.

Statement on Academic Freedom

Freshart College is committed not to impose any religious, racial or political test on any person. The College will comply with the anti-discrimination regulations on sexual orientation and religion and belief. The College will undertake these responsibilities in accordance with its fundamental commitment to the academic freedom of all its members, without fear or favour, to express unpopular opinions, advocate controversial views, adduce provocative arguments or present trenchant critiques of conventional beliefs, paradigms or ideologies. In applying these principles, the College accepts that the true test of freedom of expression is not a willingness to tolerate the expression of views with which other members of the community disagree, or which occasion them moderate offence; rather it is a willingness to tolerate the advocacy of opinions that other members of the community find unconscionable, that offend their deepest values or run counter to their most fundamental beliefs. Such tolerance is the true hallmark of respect for freedom of expression. An authentic higher education institution is one that so respects the potency of truth and the efficacy of open, rational inquiry, that it can also respect and defend the expression or advocacy of any lawful idea, opinion or argument.

Academic Freedom Statement

The College believes that academic freedom should be safeguarded against all cost. For it is only through the free search for truth and the free expression of ideas that knowledge will be advanced.

Faculty members are therefore entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results subject to the performance of their academic duties as specified by the Faculty Manual. However, sponsored research or research for pecuniary return will be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.

Faculty members are entitled to freedom in the classroom to discuss their subjects, but should not introduce controversial material which has no relation to the subject.

The faculty are members of a scholarly profession and officers of the institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they will be free from institutional censorship or discipline.

Freedom of Speech and External Speakers Policy

Another key requirement of the duty is for the College to have “policies and procedures in place for the management of events and use of all College premises, which apply to all staff, students and visitors and clearly set out what is required for any event to proceed”.

The policy makes it clear that the College has a duty to promote freedom of speech and academic freedom so far as is reasonably practical within the law; and that the College promotes an attitude of tolerance to enable academic debate on a wide range of topics, including some which may be controversial, while having due regard to the welfare of its staff and students.

The College has a zero tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment, extremism or acts which could incite or promote terrorist activity; if an event organiser has any reason to believe an event may infringe this policy they must report it in accordance with the policy.