



Academic Freedom Policy

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2016.08	Academic Board	15 August 2016	1 October 2016

1 PURPOSE

In line with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) (2011), Top Education Institute (TOP) and its staff and students are committed to act in a manner consistent with the protection and promotion of academic freedom. The context of academic freedom is embedded in TOP's logo of *Capability Integrity and Responsibility*.

TOP promotes and protects free intellectual inquiry and expression in its learning, teaching, scholarship and research activities. The Institute accordingly affirms its institutional right and responsibility, and the rights and responsibilities of each of its individual scholars and students, to pursue knowledge for its own sake. TOP further supports the responsible transmission of that knowledge so gained, openly within the academy and into the community at large, in conformity with the law, and the policies and obligations of the Institute.

This policy documents guidelines relevant to the rights and responsibilities integral to TOP's support of academic freedom and outlines procedures associated with its implementation.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all academic staff regardless of their contractual conditions, and to all students of the Institute.

3 DEFINITIONS

Academic freedom is the right for academic staff to conduct research, speak, write and publish material, subject to TOP's standards of scholarly activities, without censorship or sanction from the Institute.

4 PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

4.1 TOP's Commitment

The support of academic freedom ensures that academic staff and students are able to pursue their work in teaching, research and learning and to express views relating to their areas of academic expertise without fear or favour. In pursuance of this principle, TOP is committed to supporting the right of staff and students to:

- conduct open inquiry by exploring new ideas and questioning conventional wisdom;
- cultivate critical and independent thought through teaching, assessment and course development;
- voice a diversity of opinions and values, including expression of unpopular or controversial views without harassment or unfair treatment;

- seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media without interference; and participate, in a personal capacity, in public debates about political and social issue

4.2 Staff and student Commitment

The right to academic freedom and free intellectual inquiry comes with responsibilities. All academic staff and students must therefore ensure that they approach all issues in a balanced, open, fair and academically rigorous manner. Staff and students must:

- act with integrity and ethically in their academic endeavours;
- contribute to a work and study environment free from discrimination or harassment;
- act at all times in a way that respects the rights and privileges of others;
- show commitment to freedom of expression and in particular, be sensitive to cultural diversity; and
- respect knowledge, scholarship and truth and act with honesty and integrity at all levels of academic life.

4.3 Code of Conduct

In exercising their rights to academic freedom, staff and students must adhere to principles of law and the conditions of employment and enrolment at TOP as outlined in relevant policy documents and the Code of Conduct.

The right to academic freedom does not extend to staff expressing views on topics other than those within their sphere of expertise when identifying themselves as staff members of the Institute. Accordingly, members of the academic staff will not identify themselves as a staff member of the Institute when speaking, writing or otherwise communicating on matters not within the province of their academic expertise.

As scholars, academic staff must remember that their special position in the community imposes specific obligations. They should note that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their statements. Accordingly they should at all times be accurate, exercise appropriate restraint, show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking on behalf of TOP.

If a staff member acts in a manner clearly contrary to the principles articulated above, he or she may be in breach of the Code of Conduct and may be asked to explain their actions. If the affected academic wishes to dispute any decision they should do so via the Grievance Policy.

4.4 Grievances

Where a member of the academic staff believes that the Institute has acted in breach of his or her academic freedom, the staff member may lodge a formal complaint in writing with the Chair of the Academic Board within 21 days of the occurrence of the alleged breach. The complaint must include details of the expression or inquiry in question and the conduct of TOP that constitutes the alleged breach.

Upon receipt of the complaint, the Chair of the Academic Board must refer the complaint to the Student Complaint and Grievance Committee within 14 days of the receipt of the complaint. In investigating the complaint, the Student Complaint and Grievance Committee may take evidence and collect such testimony as it sees fit and report to the Academic Board within 21 days of the appointment of the Committee. The Academic Board shall consider the

report of the Committee and make a recommendation to Council. TOP shall be bound by the decision of the Council.

4.5 Dissemination and implementation

A copy of these principles shall be made available to all academic staff members irrespective of their contractual positions in the Institute.

Elements of these principles shall also be included in the Employee handbook to ensure quick reference for all academic staff.

The principles shall further be implemented throughout the Institute by placing it on the TOP's website. It shall be an integral part of induction programs for all newly appointed academic staff, and of all continuing professional development programs for already appointed staff.

4.6 Responsibility

The Chair of the Academic Board is responsible for the maintenance and implementation of the policy.

5 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- i. Employee Handbook
- ii. Code of Conduct for Staff
- iii. Workplace Grievance Policy and Procedure
- iv. Bullying Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy

6 VERSION CONTROL

Historical Version	Approved by	Approval Date
2016.08	Academic Board	15 August 2016