



Academic Freedom Policy

| Audience | Policy Title | Version and Date | Next Review Due | External Reference Points |
|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Public Domain | Academic Freedom Policy | V-1.01 September 2019 | September 2020 | Education (No 2) Act 1986 Education Reform Act 1988 Human Rights Act 1998 Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 HM Government: The Prevent Duty Guidance: for Higher Education Institutions in England and Wales OfS: Condition C3: Student protection plan |

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1. Aim

- 1.1. This policy sets out London Churchill College's (LCC) approach to safeguarding freedom of speech and upholding the principle of academic freedom, including the expectations, key aims and principles, procedural approach and responsibilities for the implementation, monitoring and review of the policy.
- 1.2. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Freedom of Speech Policy and Code of Practice.

2. Definitions

2.1. Academic Freedom

- 2.1.1. LCC observes the definition of Academic Freedom established by the Education Reform Act 1988 and ensures that members of the academic community are free to question and test received wisdom and put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without fear of legal or disciplinary action
- 2.1.2. LCC considers the principle of Academic Freedom to be central to the development of its academic policies and teaching strategies, reflecting the mission of higher education to enable the advancement of new ideas within an environment where free and objective debate can take place.
- 2.1.3. LCC is aware of its legal obligations, as a higher education provider in the UK to inculcate students the values of democracy and the competencies of healthy scepticism, critical and introspective thinking, rational methodologies, understanding of history and media and internet literacy.

2.2. Freedom of Speech

- 2.2.1. Freedom of speech (or expression) as defined under the Human Rights Act 1998 refers more broadly to the rights of all people 'to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers'.
- 2.2.2. Within the context of Higher Education LCC interprets this as being able to 'express, encounter, negotiate and enjoy difference in a climate of respect and learning'.

3. Commitment to Academic Freedom

- 3.1. LCC is committed to preserving an environment in which staff and students are able to exercise and not prevented from exercising their civil rights as citizens, including the right to contribute to social change through free expression of opinion on matters of public interest.
- 3.2. LCC has in place clear policies and processes for the protection of academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law and ensures that oversight of their effectiveness is maintained at senior levels of governance.



- 3.3. In respecting the right of staff and students to exercise academic freedom and freedom of speech, LCC requires that they, in return, adhere to this policy in exercising this right.

4. Legal Obligations

- 4.1. Section 43(1) of the Education (No 2) Act 1986 places a statutory obligation on Higher Education Providers in England and Wales to ‘take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students and employees of the establishment and for visiting speakers’.
- 4.2. This duty ‘within the law’ extends to ensuring ‘so far as is reasonably practicable, that the use of any premises of the establishment is not denied to any individual or body of persons on any ground connected with (a) the beliefs or views of that individual or of any member of that body; or (b) the policy or objectives of that body.’
- 4.3. For the purposes of the Act, LCC’s duty extends to Student activities.
- 4.4. Legal obligations also exist which may set limits on certain freedoms, in order to protect the rights and freedoms of others. LCC must ensure in preserving academic freedom and freedom of speech that it fulfils other relevant obligations and commitments under the following legislation:
 - 4.1.1. Human rights law
 - 4.1.2. Equality law
 - 4.1.3. Criminal law (including anti-terrorism laws and the Prevent Duty)
 - 4.1.4. The duty of care to staff, students and visitors
 - 4.1.5. Civil law claims relating to spoken words
 - 4.1.6. Data sharing
 - 4.1.7. Law relating to security staff
- 4.5. As a recognised Higher Education Institute seeking registration with the Office for Students, LCC must pay particular attention to the requirements of the Prevent Duty when implementing this Policy and Code of Conduct.

5. Policy Principles and Shared Values

- 5.1. LCC ensures that its principles of Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech are applied in all aspects of the LCC’s professional and academic work; LCC will take deliberate measures to lawfully safeguard:
 - 5.1.1. Freedom in teaching and discussion;
 - 5.1.2. Freedom in carrying out research;
 - 5.1.3. Freedom to be heard;
 - 5.1.4. Freedom in publication;
 - 5.1.5. Freedom of expression;



- 5.1.6. Freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies;
- 5.1.7. Freedom for staff in carrying out their roles.

5.2. Core Values

5.2.1. In the management of its learning opportunities, its premises and its off-campus activities, LCC will be guided by its core values, which are the fundamental British values of:

- 5.2.1.1. Respect for democracy and support or participation in the democratic process;
- 5.2.1.2. Respect for the basis on which the law is made and applies in England;
- 5.2.1.3. Support for the equality of opportunity for all;
- 5.2.1.4. Support and respect for the liberties of all within the law;
- 5.2.1.5. Respect for and tolerance of different faiths and religious and other beliefs

5.2. LCC will ensure the above tenets are incorporated within its policies and procedures for the management of external speakers and off-campus events.

5.3. LCC will ensure the use of its premises is not denied on grounds connected with the beliefs, views, policies or objectives of an individual or body of individuals, as long as such use is at all times within the law.

6. Code of Practice

6.1. In the exercise of academic freedom, all staff, students, governors and any external third parties contributing to the delivery of learning opportunities at LCC are expected to exemplify the following behaviours, namely:

- 6.1.1. To be objective and open to new ideas and opinions at all times;
- 6.1.2. To ensure academic debate is guided by rational enquiry and supported by sound and reliable evidence;
- 6.1.3. To have regard for appropriate ethical considerations when conducting research;
- 6.1.4. To differentiate clearly one's personal beliefs from objective academic observations and judgments;
- 6.1.5. To challenge in a way that is not harmful to others or to the reputation of LCC or disruptive to teaching, and discussion;
- 6.1.6. To refrain from all forms of discrimination or exclude others from academic activity whether on grounds of gender, racial background, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious belief, marital status, caring responsibilities or any other personal characteristics;
- 6.1.7. To be respectful to the personal beliefs, cultural attitudes and opinions of others, and not to cause unnecessary distress in the expression of contrary ideas and opinions
- 6.1.8. Not to attempt to impose a set of beliefs on others;



- 6.1.9. To listen and take account of views and arguments contrary to one's own beliefs and opinions, whether these be personally or institutionally held;
 - 6.1.10. To ensure that professional or academic activities do not conflict with applicable laws and statutes;
 - 6.1.11. If communicating in public, staff and students should indicate clearly that they are not communicating on behalf of LCC unless expressly authorised to do so.
- 6.2. LCC is committed to resolving of problems and controversies by the method of rational discussion, Acts or threats of physical force or disruptive acts which interfere with campus activities, freedom of movement on the campus, or freedom for students to pursue their studies are the antithesis of academic freedom and will not be tolerated by LCC.

7. Responsibility

- 7.1. It is the responsibility of all members of LCC's community (extending to all staff, students, and executive members), as well any external parties invited by LCC to contribute to the learning experience, to uphold this policy and exemplify the behaviours given in its Code of Practice.
- 7.2. Ultimate responsibility for academic standards within LCC resides with the Academic Board, which is responsible for the implementation of effective policies and procedures associated with quality assurance; the Academic Board is the custodian of academic freedom and freedom of speech at LCC.

8. Monitoring and Review

- 8.1. The Academic Board will intermittently review teaching strategies and practices at LCC in order to satisfy itself that principles and code of practice outlined herein are duly upheld throughout the institution; it will report its activities and findings to the Board of Directors.
- 8.2. Concerns about breaches of this policy should be reported to the appropriate Programme Manager, or where they regard, the Principal.
- 8.3. Alternatively, LCC's complaints procedures can be used to report and address risks associated with academic freedom and freedom of speech.
- 8.4. Serious breaches of this policy may be reported through LCC's Protected Disclosures (Whistleblowing) Policy; these take on board the principles of openness, accountability and natural justice which are embedded in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013.
- 8.5. LCC will ensure that no member of staff, director, student or third party will be treated less favourably by LCC where they raise concerns about academic or professional standards at LCC, where such matters are raised in good faith. LCC will take all such disclosures seriously and investigate in accordance with the appropriate policies and procedures.



- 8.6. This policy will be reviewed and updated annually by the Quality and Enhancement Steering Committee; changes to it will be ratified and approved by the Academic Board.

9. The Prevent Duty

- 9.1. As a recognised Higher Education Body, LCC has a statutory duty to have due regard for the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism; this is formally referred to as the Prevent Duty. The Prevent duty should not be obstructive to academic freedom, freedom of speech or balanced discussion of controversial issues such as religion, politics and current affairs, rather it should ensure an environment in which these can thrive.