



ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY

Purpose

Central to Lincoln Education Australia's (LEA's) overarching purpose in delivering higher education is building an environment in which staff and students have the freedom to engage in free intellectual inquiry, academic research, and critical inquiry. LEA** considers this environment to be crucial for upholding highest academic standards and maintaining academic integrity, as it enables staff and students to honestly express themselves on academic matters, and to pursue new knowledge frontiers.

The *Academic Freedom Policy* establishes LEA's commitment to promoting and protecting academic freedom, outlines what the Institution considers to be acceptable and protected under this policy and sets out measures to create learning and teaching environment in which staff and students enjoy academic freedom.

**The trading name for the Lincoln Institute of Higher Education (LIHE) is Lincoln Education Australia (LEA).

Scope

This policy applies to all academic staff and current students of LEA. The policy supports the freedom of academic staff and students to engage in intellectual inquiry, to express their opinions and beliefs, and to contribute to public debate, in relation to their subjects of study and research.

LEA supports and encourages freedom of lawful speech as a necessary condition for academic freedom. However, it does not offer staff or students protection for any speech or expression that is illegal under Australian federal or state laws. Additionally, this policy does not protect any form of speech or expression that contravenes LEA's *Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedure*, *Anti-Discrimination Policy and Procedure*, or *Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure*.

Principles

LEA considers academic freedom as essential for the purpose of providing education, maintaining academic integrity, and contributing to the development of new knowledge. LEA will thus ensure that the academic freedom of staff and students in teaching, learning and research is promoted and protected.

Academic freedom is understood by LEA to be the right to inquire, research, discuss, comment on and disseminate knowledge and ideas with the intent to develop further knowledge, without censure or undue influence from others.

Academic speech or expression shall be based on evidence and critical inquiry, adhering to sound academic practice as per the *Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures*.



LEA staff and students are required to conduct themselves appropriately at all times, and especially when their conduct will reflect on the institution's reputation.

Teaching and Learning Environment

LEA aspires to create an environment in which the academic freedom of each staff member and student is protected.

LEA's commitment to and support for free intellectual inquiry will be embedded in all areas of its academic operations, including:

- The Teaching and Learning Plan
- Course design and delivery
- Expectations for academic integrity and proper conduct
- Handling of student complaints and appeals
- Assessment strategies

Rights and Responsibilities

Staff and students have the following rights and responsibilities:

- Staff and students have the right to engage in intellectual inquiry in their area of expertise and course of study, respectively.
- Staff members have the right to comment publicly on academic matters within their area of expertise.
- Staff and students have the right to appeal decisions made about their academic speech or expression through the appropriate appeal pathways.
- Staff and students are expected to be respectful of others at all times, both on and off the campus
- Staff and students should not interrupt or disrupt the academic activities of others unless those activities contravene a LEA policy, a LEA code of conduct, or Australian federal or state law.

LEA has the following rights and responsibilities:

- LEA has the right to make judgements on whether academic activities are consistent with the definition of academic freedom outlined in this policy.
- LEA will ensure that staff and students are informed about their academic freedom and their rights and responsibilities under this policy through orientation, induction, and ongoing professional development activities.
- LEA will ensure that the academic freedom of staff and students is not hindered by corporate or business interests.
- To the best of its ability, LEA will protect staff and students from any adverse effects resulting from exercising academic freedom as defined in this Policy.

Compliance



All staff members and students at LEA are required to comply with this policy and its procedures and with related policies and respective procedures. Non-compliance may result in disciplinary action.

File Number	LEA-GEN-COR-70001-D
Responsible Officer	Chief Executive Officer
Contact Officer	Academic Dean
Legislative Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015</i>• <i>Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011</i>
Supporting Documents	
Related Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy</i>• <i>Anti-Discrimination Policy and Procedures</i>• <i>Assessment Policy</i>• <i>Course Development and Approval Policy and Procedures</i>• <i>Teaching and Learning Plan</i>• <i>Student Code of Conduct</i>• <i>Staff Code of Conduct</i>• <i>Staff Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedures</i>
Superseded Documents	
Effective Date	1 January 2022
Next Review	3 years from the effective date

Definitions

Academic Board: Governing body responsible for academic matters, including learning and teaching, course approval, workforce planning, academic staff appointments, research and professional development, academic policies and procedures, overseeing student grievances and appeals processes.

Academic Freedom: The right of staff and students to engage in free intellectual inquiry within their fields of expertise and study, including the right to research, discuss, comment on, and disseminate knowledge and ideas with the intent to develop further knowledge.

Academic Integrity: The set of values relating to academic standards that an institution is expected to observe, uphold and promote to staff and students. These include fairness, transparency, honesty, and respect for other scholars and ethical scholarship.

Corporate Governance Board: Governing body responsible for oversight of all higher education operations, including the ongoing viability of LEA and the quality of its higher education delivery. The Corporate Governance Board guides the Management and delegates responsibility for academic matters to the Academic Board.

Critical inquiry: Describes the analytic and research process of closely evaluating the key theories and ideas of a subject unit so to consider the alternative and/or conflicting perspectives and understandings of an idea. Critical inquiry produces well-considered analyses that can challenge accepted ideas and spark new avenues of research and inquiry.



Review Schedule

This policy shall be reviewed by the Academic Board every three years.

Version History			
Version number:	Approved by:	Approval Date:	Revision Notes:
1.0	Academic Board	16/07/2020	New policy
1.1	Academic Board	22/02/2023	TEQSA and CRICOS requirements incorporated