



**ACADEMIC
FREEDOM, INTEGRITY
AND
FREE INTELLECTUAL
ENQUIRY POLICY**

1. Overview

As academic freedom and free intellectual enquiry and expression is the cornerstone of critical enquiry and the defining characteristics of a higher education provider, Skyline Higher Education Australia (“SHEA”) is committed to the promotion of these interlinking concepts. This commitment also reflects the intent of Standard 6.1.4 of the *Standards for Higher Education*¹.

The overarching statement of this commitment lies within SHEA’s Company Constitution which states that “the company is committed to support academic integrity, freedom of speech and academic freedom in all its endeavours”. Furthermore, one of the key functions of the Academic Board, as espoused in its terms of reference, is to “facilitate free intellectual enquiry, encourage freedom of speech respect academic freedom and ensure academic integrity”.

2. Commitment to scholarship and academic integrity

SHEA expects its academic and where relevant, its professional staff, to exhibit a strong commitment to scholarship and the professional expectations of their academic disciplines. The pursuit of knowledge through intellectual inquiry is highly valued as a mark of institutional excellence². To support this pursuit of knowledge, SHEA makes the commitment that its academic staff will have freedom of inquiry without fear of repression.

However, in the pursuit of knowledge academic integrity is essential to the fabric of an academic community, embracing managers, researchers, teachers, and students³. Therefore, when staff undertake any intellectual enquiry, it is important that they are cognisant of their responsibility to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity.

SHEA takes a serious view of academic misconduct and will penalise staff who are found guilty of offences associated with misappropriation of others’ work, misrepresentation of personal performance and fraud, improper access to scholarly resources and obstructing others in pursuit of their academic endeavours.

3. Respect for academic freedom

Academic freedom and its related responsibilities as recognised and practised by SHEA have their fundamental basis in the culture commonly found in Australian universities and other higher education providers. Specifically, academic staff and students are entitled to full freedom without unreasonable restriction in any scholarly activity they pursue to encourage scholarly enquiry. Furthermore, academic staff are entitled to freedom in the teaching environment to discuss the subject they are delivering; however, they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter that has no relevance to the content of the subject.

The concept of academic freedom includes:

¹ Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
<<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2021L00488>>

² Refer to the Institute’s *Scholarly Activity Policy and Procedure* for more detail.

³ In regard to academic integrity and students, reference should be made to SHEA’s *Student Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy and Procedure*.

- a) the freedom of academic staff to teach, discuss, and research and to disseminate and publish the results of their research without restriction by established scholarly consensus or institutional policy, but subject to scholarly standards;
- b) 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;
- c) the freedom of academic staff and students to express their opinions in relation to the higher education provider in which they work or are enrolled free from institutional censorship or sanction;
- d) the freedom of academic staff and students to make lawful public comment on any issue in their personal capacities, not speaking on behalf of the Institute or as an officer of the Institute;
- e) the freedom of academic staff to participate in professional or representative academic bodies; and
- f) the freedom of students to participate in student societies and associations⁴.

As noted above, when speaking or writing as private citizens, academic staff are free from institutional censorship or discipline. However, academic staff should keep in mind that as scholars the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Therefore, they should at all times demonstrate academic and scholarly rigour to ensure accuracy, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the Institute. Academic staff will refrain from using their institutional affiliation when publicly expressing an opinion on topics outside their area of expertise and/or on contentious issues where personal opinion may deviate from the Institute’s published position.

The Institute will ensure that students and staff have a reasonable expectation that their right to hold values of their own choosing will be respected even when those values are being questioned. Academic freedom carries associated responsibilities to exercise professional care and competence in the conduct of teaching and research, to subject academic work to the critical scrutiny of others, to consider the impact that one’s work may have on others, and not to impinge on the ability of others to engage freely in teaching and learning, research, and academic debate.

4. Version history

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Details
1.0	Academic Board	4 November 2022	Document creation and initial approval

Document owner: Dean

⁴ From the Model Code in the report by Mr Robert French into freedom of speech in Australian higher education providers (March 2019): <https://www.dese.gov.au/higher-education-reviews-and-consultations/independent-review-adoption-model-code-freedom-speech-and-academic-freedom>