



Freedom of Intellectual Inquiry Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines Victorian School of Commerce (VSC) commitment to the promotion, protection and exercise of freedom of intellectual inquiry. It will also describe the circumstances that will warrant VSC to constrain the exercise of these freedoms and outline the responsibilities of staff and students in exercising their rights under this policy.

Scope

The policy applies to all staff and students and associates of VSC.

Definitions

Academic Freedom – the principle that staff and students should be free to conduct research, undertake learning and teaching, communicate and publish, subject to the standards of scholarship without unreasonable interference and restriction.

Freedom of Speech – Relates to the freedom of staff and students to make lawful public comments on any issue within their personal capacity whether oral, written or creative activity in person or via social media. It does not allow for inflammatory speech or defamation.

Intellectual Freedom – the rights related to academic freedom and freedom of speech that are protected by VSC.

Policy

VSC recognises and values the right to freedom of intellectual inquiry and scholarship as central to its work in teaching and research and is committed to protecting this right. VSC encourages all academic staff and students to engage in intellectual inquiry freely. VSC promotes a diversity of opinion and the right to express that opinion freely.

“Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause of movement may be explored”

The following principles underpin VSC’s support and approach to freedom of intellectual inquiry:

- academic freedom and freedom of intellectual enquiry are the foundations of critical enquiry, and VSC will promote and protect these;
- academic freedom carries associated responsibilities and academic staff will exercise professional care and competence in teaching and research;
- the rights of students and academic staff members to engage in intellectual debate are protected;
- to avert the threat of censorship and its effects on vigorous intellectual debate;



- the right to academic freedom does not encompass discussions or statements that cause harm, including through impairment of the legal rights of third parties; it does not encompass unlawful acts or disrespectful treatment towards others.
- academic staff members at VSC will be free, and encouraged to make public comments regarding topics within their area of specialisation; and
- academic staff will not face discrimination as a result of undertaking research in the pursuit of growing the academic body of knowledge, even when the subject matter of such research is controversial.

Responsibilities

Intellectual freedom carries with it the duty to use the freedom in a reasonable and responsible manner in the search for and dissemination of knowledge. Staff and students have an obligation to act in a responsible manner in their exercise of intellectual freedom of inquiry.

Academic staff will exercise professional care and competence in their research and teaching and subject their work to the critical scrutiny of others, and consider the impact their words in writing or verbally may have on others. They must not impinge on the rights of other staff or students to also freely engage in learning, research and academic debate.

VSC's Academic Board, Learning and Teaching Committee and Dean will monitor and ensure that Freedom of intellectual enquiry and speech is supported at all levels within VSC and are part of the VSC culture.

All staff and students have the responsibility to support others'; rights to freedom of intellectual inquiry, whether this is participation in debates, or expressing unpopular and controversial views. This does not mean the right to harass, vilify or intimidate other persons or to demean others' views in any way.

Any complaints or disagreements relating to this policy will be dealt with under *Staff Complaints and Appeals Policy* and *Student Complaints and Appeals Policy* or under the *Code of Conduct*.

Legislation

This policy complies with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021.1 which states:

Research and its associated activities are conducted in accordance with a research policy framework that is designed to achieve:

- a. ethical conduct of research and responsible research practice*
- b. clarification of ownership and management of intellectual property*
- c. successful management of research partnerships*
- d. clarification of requirements for publication and authorship, and*
- e. resolution of allegations of misconduct in research.*



Related policy instruments

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic Integrity Procedure

Code of Conduct

Equity and Diversity Policy

Scholarly Activity Policy

Staff Complaints and Appeals Policy

Staff Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Student Complaints and Appeals Policy

Student Complaint and Appeals Procedure

Related documents and legislation

Copyright Act 1968

Higher Education Support Act 2003

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) **2021Administration**

Revision History

| Version | Approval date | Approval body | Review date |
|---------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| 0.1 | 24/07/2020 | Academic Board | |
| 1.0 | 02/06/2021 | Academic Board | 30/06/2022 |