



Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech: The Queen's Foundation

The Queen's Foundation values academic freedom and is committed to promoting and positively encouraging free expression and debate amongst its staff, students and visitors. We believe this is foundational to the ethos and practice of the institution and of the context in which robust teaching, learning and research is able to flourish.

Scope

This policy applies to all current staff and students of the Foundation, including visiting lecturers, associate tutors, and occasional speakers or students. The freedom expressed within this policy operates at all times within the confines of all other policies of the institutions including but not limited to:

- Code of Conduct & Harassment and Bullying Policy
- Fitness to Practice Framework
- Staff Handbook

Context

As an ecumenical theological training college, with formal connections with a number of churches many of our staff and students operate within the context of professional conduct and fitness to practice procedures that are under the auspices of their particular denomination or stream. Where there may be points of difference between the respective processes of the churches, the Foundation will seek to cultivate an environment that respects the distinctive approaches of each church and/or individual whilst also facilitating a milieu of mutual listening and exploration.

Our student handbook required the following conduct within the classroom (and by extension to conduct across campus life):

During class time, you should expect to give and receive thoughts and opinions with courtesy and honesty. Your views should be respected, but that does not prevent them being challenged. Where you challenge the views of others, including those of the tutor, you should do so with the same respect and courtesy you would expect for yourself.

Classes will contain students of different cultures, ethnicities, genders, sexualities and backgrounds; they may include participants whose reasons for studying and motivations are different from yours, so be careful about making assumptions about what is familiar or 'common sense'. All participants in the module should respect the experiences, perspectives and sensibilities of others, even when they do not agree with them. Tutors and students alike should be careful about the language they use, avoiding and critiquing language that excludes and offends. Similarly, any talk or action that may be interpreted as belittling the contribution of others should be challenged by the tutor.

The Foundation encourages a covenantal approach to life and study together, for all those participating in its practice. It recognizes the demands that such a covenantal approach generates, and the impact that prior assumptions and prejudices (conscious and unconscious), limited awareness and sometimes selfish pre-occupations have upon life together. Similarly, it recognizes the requisite generosity, hospitality, openness, awareness, empathy, wisdom and vision for the covenantal approach to flourish. Whilst all



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staff/students/residents have a shared responsibility in cultivating this context, the Foundation actively seeks to provide structures and framework in which this work can be enacted and enhanced.

Academic Freedom

The Foundation has an explicit duty in law to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of expression within the law is secured for students, staff and visiting speakers¹.

As such the rights and responsibilities of staff and students according to the terms and conditions of their employment or student contract are set out below:

- The right to:*
- fulfil their functions without discrimination of any kind.
 - teach/learn/publish without any interference or fear of dismissal or loss of privileges, subject to accepted professional principles including professional responsibility and intellectual rigor with regard to standards and methods of teaching.
 - be consulted about the nature and development of the curriculum.
 - carry out research without any interference, subject to accepted professional principles including professional responsibility, supervision processes, peer review and intellectual rigor with regard to standards and methods of research ethics.²

*The
responsibility
to:*

- respect the academic freedom of other members of the academic community (inside and outside of the Foundation) and to ensure the fair discussion of contrary views.
- ensure that teaching, learning, research and scholarship (including publications), should be conducted in full accordance with recognised ethical and professional standards.
- to seek to achieve the highest possible standards in their professional work.
- to cultivate a context of ongoing learning and development whether for themselves or for the students/ learners that they serve.
- To avoid conflicts of interest but where these occur to resolve them through appropriate disclosure with the institution. It is noted, for example, that many staff of the institution occupy formal roles within their denomination and also may be actively researching in a similar area.

¹ Education (No.2) Act 1986

² As per the Policy of the RCUK on Good Research Governance and Integrity: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/research-integrity/>



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Freedom of Speech

It is a fundamental policy of the Foundation, as an academic institution, that on its property and in its activities, there should be freedom of expression within the law. The pursuit of knowledge and the exchange of ideas should be conducted with dignity, courtesy and respect, and without interference.

The Foundation also has a legal duty to take such steps as is reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of expression within the law is secured for its staff, students and visiting speakers.

This does not mean that the right to freedom of expression is unlimited. There are restrictions, for example, imposed by laws that exist to protect national security and public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of the reputation and rights of others, and to prevent the disclosure of information received in confidence.

Freedom of expression has to be set in the context of our values and the values of a democratic and inclusive society. The Foundation expects speakers to respect those values and to be sensitive to its diverse and inclusive community and to its stated ethos. The Foundation has to ensure that its staff and students are able to work, study and live in an environment free from unlawful intimidation, harassment or abuse. Hate crime and incitement to commit illegal acts will not be tolerated.

Events

Any activity, including but not limited to holding a meeting, hosting a visiting speaker or distributing leaflets or other written or on-line material, which is likely to engage the provisions of this Code must be notified to the Leadership Team via the Principal's executive assistant no later than three weeks before the events is due to take place.

In considering whether or not to permit an activity to go ahead on its premises, the Foundation shall ensure that the stated ethos of the Foundation is upheld and honoured by the event or activity. The Vision Statement expresses this in this way:

The Queen's Foundation is dedicated to excellence in theological education and personal formation by:

- Nurturing and equipping Christians in their discipleship;
- Preparing people for mission and ministry in lay and ordained roles;
- Resourcing research that serves the mission of God in the world.

We celebrate unity in diversity, in a community that is international, multi-cultural, and ecumenical. We aim to enable Christians to deepen their spiritual life, to grow in a faith that is generous, enquiring, deeply rooted and creative in thought and practice, and to be passionate for God's work in God's world.

No event, including the hosting of an external speaker, shall be allowed by the Leadership Team which does not mirror this ethos.



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For internal events, the organisers of any permitted event shall ensure that a 'Principal Organiser' is appointed who must be a member of staff or student of the Foundation and who will be responsible for ensuring that the organisers comply with the obligations placed upon them under this Code of Practice and therefore by the Foundation's ethos as clearly stated in its handbooks and policies, including the Communications and Publicity Policy.

For external events, where the Foundation's space is hired by another group or organisation, they will be asked to agree in writing to the terms of this Code of Practice.

The Registrar or Prevent Duty co-ordinator shall report to Leadership Team on the circumstances of any significant infringements of, and departures from, the provisions of this Code. The Leadership Team may also refer such matters to the Governing Body. Infringements of, or departures from, these procedures by employees or students will make them liable to disciplinary action. If infringement is by those hiring accommodation on Foundation premises, there may be an immediate termination of the agreement to use the Foundation premises.

If any such actions involve breaches of the law, the Foundation will be ready to assist the prosecuting authorities.

Related Legislation:

- Public Order Act 1986
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Terrorism Act 2006, Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015