



TIIS
THE INSTITUTE
OF INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES



Academic Freedom and Free Intellectual Inquiry Policy

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Prepared by: Academic Dean, TIIS | Endorsed by: Academic Board

TEQSA Registered Higher Education Provider | CRICOS Registered | HESF (Threshold Standards) 2021

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Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to protect and promote academic freedom and free intellectual inquiry at The Institute of International Studies (TIIS) Pty Ltd, in fulfilment of TIIS obligations under the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA) and the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (HESF), Domain B, Standard B1.

This Policy establishes the rights and responsibilities of academic staff and students, articulates the institutional commitment to free intellectual inquiry, and sets out the procedures by which any alleged infringement of academic freedom will be addressed.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All academic and professional staff employed by TIIS
- All students enrolled in TIIS programs
- All activities related to teaching, learning, research, and scholarly communication conducted under the auspices of TIIS
- Third parties engaged by TIIS in any capacity that involves academic or research activities

Definitions

Unless otherwise defined in this document, all capitalised terms are defined in the TIIS Glossary of Terms.

Academic Freedom: The freedom of academic staff and students to engage in teaching, learning, research, and intellectual inquiry without undue constraint, as defined in HESA s.19.115 and HESF Domain B, Standard B1.

Free Intellectual Inquiry: The pursuit of knowledge through critical examination, reasoned debate, and scholarly investigation, conducted in an environment that encourages diverse perspectives and respectful discourse.

Higher Education Provider (HEP): A body registered as a higher education provider under the TEQSA Act 2011 -- in this context, TIIS (PRV14085).

Scholarly Activity: Research, creative work, professional practice, and other forms of systematic inquiry that contribute to knowledge within a discipline or professional field.

Statutory Definition of Academic Freedom (HESA s.19.115)

TIIS adopts the definition of Academic Freedom as set out in the Higher Education Support Act 2003, being:

1. The freedom of academic staff to teach, discuss, and research, and to disseminate and publish the results of their research
2. 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 units of study and research
3. 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
4. The freedom of academic staff to participate in professional or representative academic bodies
5. The freedom of students to participate in student societies and associations

6. The autonomy of the higher education provider in relation to the choice of academic courses and offerings, the ways in which they are taught, and the choices of research activities and the ways in which they are conducted

Principles

TIIS is committed to the following principles in relation to academic freedom and free intellectual inquiry:

- a. Academic freedom is a foundational condition for the advancement of knowledge, innovation, and democratic society
- b. The protection of academic freedom is an obligation of the institution, not merely a discretionary benefit
- c. Academic freedom is exercised within a framework of mutual respect, professional responsibility, and lawful conduct
- d. Students have the right to learn in an environment that encourages critical inquiry, diverse viewpoints, and respectful challenge of established ideas
- e. TIIS will not intimidate, penalise, or disadvantage any staff member or student for the exercise of legitimate academic freedom
- f. TIIS will ensure that governance arrangements support rather than constrain free intellectual inquiry

Policy

1. Institutional Commitment and Obligations

TIIS, as a registered higher education provider, affirms its obligation under HESF Domain B, Standard B1 to maintain an environment in which academic freedom and free intellectual inquiry can be exercised. Specifically:

- 1.1 TIIS will not, as an institution, take action against any staff member or student on the grounds of the content of their academic work, teaching, research, or scholarly publication, where that content constitutes a legitimate exercise of academic freedom.
- 1.2 TIIS will maintain governance arrangements -- including the Academic Board -- that can protect academic freedom and resolving disputes that may arise from its exercise.
- 1.3 TIIS institutional autonomy in determining academic programs, research priorities, and pedagogical approaches will be exercised in a manner consistent with the protection of individual academic freedom.
- 1.4 TIIS will ensure that all staff and students are made aware of this Policy on commencement and at each review cycle.
- 1.5 TIIS will include academic freedom obligations as a standing agenda item for the Academic Board at least once per calendar year.

2. Rights of Academic Staff

Academic staff at TIIS have the right to:

- 2.1 Undertake scholarship that informs their teaching and conduct research that contributes to the creation of new knowledge and original creative work
- 2.2 Determine pedagogical approach and the treatment of intellectual and practical issues in the units they teach, ensuring balanced presentation that enhances student learning
- 2.3 Disseminate and publish the results of their research and scholarly activities through appropriate channels
- 2.4 Express informed professional views on matters related to their discipline, expertise, or professional experience, free from undue institutional constraint
- 2.5 Participate in determining academic policies, curriculum development, and institutional governance through appropriate representative bodies
- 2.6 Engage in public discourse and contribute to community debate on matters within their area of expertise or on matters of public interest
- 2.7 Participate in professional and representative academic bodies relevant to their discipline
- 2.8 Express opinions about TIIS policies, practices, and operations through appropriate channels without fear of reprisal

3. Rights of Students

Students at TIIS have the right to:

- 3.1 Engage in intellectual inquiry and critical examination of ideas within their field of study
- 3.2 Express their opinions and beliefs in academic contexts, including classroom discussions, assessments, and research activities
- 3.3 Participate in reasoned debate and contribute to public discourse on matters related to their studies or of general public interest
- 3.4 Question, challenge, and critique ideas, theories, and arguments in a respectful and constructive manner

- 3.5 Express opinions about TIIS policies, practices, and operations through appropriate channels
- 3.6 Participate in student societies, associations, and representative bodies
- 3.7 Be taught in an environment free from political, religious, or commercial interference that would compromise their academic development

4. Responsibilities of Academic Staff

Academic staff must:

- 1.6 Exercise academic freedom in a manner that is respectful, ethical, and consistent with professional standards of higher education
- 1.7 Distinguish between personal opinions and official institutional positions when speaking publicly or engaging with media
- 1.8 Ensure that teaching and research activities maintain academic integrity and scholarly rigour
- 1.9 Respect the academic freedom of colleagues and students, including facilitating opportunities for students to develop their own critical judgment
- 1.10 Comply with applicable legislation, institutional policies, and employment obligations
- 1.11 Use TIIS communication channels and resources for their intended purposes
- 1.12 Recognise that they do not have the right to speak on behalf of TIIS unless formally authorised to do so
- 1.13 Refrain from conduct that would constitute harassment, bullying, or discrimination, even in the exercise of academic freedom

5. Responsibilities of Students

Students must:

- 5.1 Develop a capacity for critical judgment and engage in sustained and independent pursuit of knowledge
- 5.2 Exercise freedom of speech and inquiry in a manner that is respectful of others and conducive to learning
- 5.3 Respect the academic freedom of staff and fellow students
- 5.4 Comply with applicable legislation, institutional policies, and the Student Code of Conduct
- 5.5 Recognise that freedom to learn depends upon appropriate conduct in the classroom and broader academic community

6. Limitations and Qualifications

Academic freedom is not absolute. It is exercised within the following constraints:

6.1 Legal Constraints

- 1.13.1** Compliance with Australian legislation, including anti-discrimination laws, workplace health and safety requirements, privacy legislation, and defamation laws
- 1.13.2** Adherence to TIIS policies, particularly the Staff Code of Conduct, Student Code of Conduct, Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy, and Acceptable Use of Information Technology Facilities Policy
- 1.13.3** Compliance with any applicable professional or accreditation standards relevant to the discipline

6.2 Media and Public Communications

Staff members have academic freedom to engage with media, including social media, on matters within their expertise. However:

- Staff must clearly distinguish between personal opinions and official TIIS positions
- Staff do not have the right to speak on behalf of TIIS unless formally authorised to do so
- Staff should exercise professional judgment and consider potential impacts on students, colleagues, and the institution

6.3 Institutional Resources

- TIIS communication channels and resources must be used for their intended purpose
- Academic freedom does not entitle staff or students to misuse institutional resources or platforms for purposes unrelated to their academic or employment activities

6.4 Protection from Harassment and Discrimination

Academic freedom does not permit conduct that:

- Constitutes harassment, bullying, or discrimination under applicable legislation
- Creates an unsafe or hostile learning or working environment
- Violates the dignity or human rights of others

7. Complaints and Redress

- 7.1 Any staff member or student who believes that their academic freedom has been improperly restricted or that they have been subject to reprisal for its exercise may raise a complaint in accordance with the TIIS Complaints and Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure.
- 7.2 Complaints alleging institutional interference with academic freedom will be referred directly to the Academic Board for investigation and determination.
- 7.3 TIIS will not take any adverse action against a complainant solely on the basis of having made a complaint under this Policy.
- 7.4 Where a complaint is upheld, TIIS will take appropriate remedial action, which may include review of a decision, reinstatement of rights, or other remedies as determined by the Academic Board.

8. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Academic Dean	Policy sponsor; initiates triennial review; refers complaints to Academic Board; provides annual compliance report
Academic Board	Policy endorser and approver; oversight of academic freedom protections; final decision-making body for institutional complaints
Board of Directors	Ultimate governance accountability; receives Academic Board reports on academic freedom matters
Program Coordinators	Communicate policy to students and staff at unit commencement; refer potential breaches to Academic Dean
All Staff	Exercise academic freedom responsibly; respect the rights of others; report suspected breaches
All Students	Exercise academic freedom responsibly; comply with Student Code of Conduct; utilise complaint mechanisms if rights are infringed

Procedure

1. Reporting and Redress Procedure

The following procedure applies where a staff member or student believes their academic freedom has been restricted, or that they have been subject to reprisal for its legitimate exercise:

Step 1: The affected person should, in the first instance, attempt to resolve the matter informally by raising their concern with their immediate supervisor, the relevant Program Coordinator, or the Academic Dean.

Step 2: Where informal resolution is not appropriate or has been unsuccessful, the affected person may submit a formal complaint in writing to the Academic Dean, who will refer the matter to the Academic Board within five (5) business days.

Step 3: The Academic Board will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five (5) business days and appoint an independent investigator or panel, as appropriate, within ten (10) business days.

Step 4: The investigator or panel will provide a written report to the Academic Board within thirty (30) business days of appointment, unless an extension is agreed.

Step 5: The Academic Board will determine the outcome and communicate its decision to all parties within ten (10) business days of receiving the report.

Step 6: Where the complaint is upheld, the Academic Board will specify remedial action and a timeframe for implementation.

Step 7: A dissatisfied party may appeal the Academic Board determination to the Board of Directors within twenty (20) business days of receiving the decision. The appeal must be on the grounds that correct procedures were not followed.

Throughout this process, TIIS will maintain the confidentiality of all parties to the extent practicable and consistent with the conduct of a fair investigation.

2. Monitoring and Review Procedure

2.1 The Academic Dean will provide an annual report to the Academic Board on the implementation of this Policy, including any complaints received, outcomes, and any emerging issues.

2.2 This Policy will be reviewed every three (3) years from the date of approval, or earlier if required due to changes in legislation, regulatory requirements, or identified operational issues.

2.3 Proposed amendments will be presented to the Academic Board for endorsement and the Board of Directors for approval.

2.4 TIIS will notify all staff and students of any material changes to this Policy within thirty (30) days of approval.

2.5 Review outcomes will be documented in the Version History table of this Policy.

Related Documents

- Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedure
- Assessment Policy and Procedure
- Complaints and Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure
- Course Design and Development Policy and Procedure
- Acceptable Use of Information Technology Facilities Policy

- Privacy Policy
- Research Policy
- Scholarship Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Student Code of Conduct Policy
- TIIS Glossary of Terms

External Legislation

- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth) -- Domain B (B1.1, B1.1.1, B1.1.2, B1.2), Standard 6.1.4
- Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA) -- s.19.115 (Definition of Academic Freedom)
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (Cth)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)

Version History

Version	2.0
Endorsed by	Academic Board
Endorsement Date	08 April 2026
Approved by	Board of Directors
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Publication Date	TBD
Duration	3 Years from Approval Date
Policy Category	Corporate Governance
HESF Standards	Domain B — Standard B1 (Free Intellectual Inquiry); Standard 6.1.4; Higher Education Support Act 2003 s.19.115

Policy Title	Changes	Date	Approver
Academic Freedom and Free Intellectual Inquiry Policy	New Policy -- full redraft to HESF (2021) Domain B compliance standard; restructured to Policy and Procedure format aligned with TIIS Assessment Policy and Procedure v1.0; added Procedure, HESF Compliance Summary, Responsibility table, and Benchmark sections		Board of Directors
Academic Freedom and Free Intellectual Inquiry Policy v1.0	Original policy; superseded A01 Academic Freedom, Integrity and Free Intellectual Inquiry Policy and Procedures and A12 Student Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy and Procedures	December 2024	Academic Board

Policy Sponsor: Academic Dean or delegate

Policy Endorser: Academic Board

Policy Approver: Board of Directors