

Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression: Legislation Work Stream

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of the Legislation Work Stream is to ensure an up-to-date, transparent, and supportive, framework of core policies and procedures that facilitate academic freedom and freedom of expression, that is compliant with current legislation and sector regulations, and which builds upon evolving good practice. Critically, to avoid a policy driven environment and to build buy-in, the work stream would also seek to provide guidance and training for the university community in all legislative aspects, bringing 'to life' the democratic affordances of these freedoms (in global perspective).

Guiding Question(s)

1. What does the university need to do to ensure that it meets its legislative requirements in respect of academic freedom and freedom of expression?

Remit

The Work Stream will:

1. remain up-to-date with its understanding of the legislative and regulatory environment regarding Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression, providing guidance to the Coordinating Group around legislative aspects of its work.
2. engage with the university community, staff and students, to discuss and provide guidance and training about the legislative and policy aspects of academic freedom and freedom of expression, devising events, developing resources, workshops, and contributing to the Coordinating Group's communication plan.
3. raise awareness and understanding of the University's Freedom of Expression statement, highlighting its legislative facets.
4. review relevant groups, such as the Compliance Group, and existing policies, such as the External Speaker, Dignity and Respect, and research policies, considering relevant legal obligations, such as those under the Equality Act 2010, consulting other Work Streams for feedback on draft work/plans, as relevant.

Membership

The work stream membership will comprise those with relevant academic and professional expertise and experience. Membership will be by invitation, following discussion between the Work Stream Group Convenor and Convenor/Deputy Convenor of the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Coordinating Group. However, the group will be inclusive and will wish to engage a wide variety of stakeholders and contributions to develop its proposals and take forward and deliver the outcomes of the work.

Timescale and meeting arrangements

The number, frequency and format of meetings will be ordinarily monthly. However, additional meetings may be scheduled in support of the milestones and key deliverables. To ensure maximum participation, meetings may be online unless the purpose of the meeting would be better supported by a different mode.

The meeting agenda and any papers will normally be circulated via email, at least 5 working days prior to each meeting, and a note of actions will be circulated within 5 working days of each meeting.

Each Work Stream member is responsible for contributing opinions and relevant examples of experience for discussion at the group. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, they will be invited to submit a written contribution to the group, to ensure their views are considered in their absence.

Reporting

The Work Stream will report regularly on its progress to the Coordinating Group and will support the achievement of deliverables within its focus area.

Governance and Operation

The Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Legislation Work Stream reports to the Coordinating Group via the Work Stream Convenor.