



## Statement of Academic Freedom

Revised August 2018

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## **Academic Freedom**

The College sees respect for academic freedom as a primary value without which no institution can exist. Through its commitment to academic freedom, the College is committed to ensuring that academic staff, students and other members of the College have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges. It is similarly committed to ensuring that staff have the right to criticise the functioning of higher education institutions, including their own, without placing themselves in jeopardy. The College believes that the academic freedom of faculty members to research, teach or communicate ideas or facts (including those that are inconvenient to external political groups or to authorities) without being targeted for repression, job loss, or detriment is essential to the principles of academia.

However, academic freedom must be applied carefully and has limitations in practice. Academic staff should never make statements that are at variance with the institutional values of the College, which they have contractually agreed to support. In particular staff must be careful to ensure that they apply mutual respect to colleagues and opponents in debate and not promote views which can be interpreted as discriminatory in terms of gender, racial background, sexual orientation, age or any other personal characteristics. They are encouraged to avoid controversial issues not related directly to their fields of study and if communicating in public they should indicate clearly that they are not speaking for Magna Carta College unless they are authorized to do so.

## **Principles**

Through its commitment to collegiality, Magna Carta College is committed to ensuring that members of staff have the opportunity to make their voice heard, directly or indirectly, on any matter of concern to them, and in particular to ensuring that they are consulted on the development of strategy and on matters of policy and principle, including the basis on which resources are allocated.

Specifically, the College is committed to principles including but not limited to:

- Ensuring that academic decisions are taken by academic bodies;
- Encouraging regular and effective staff meetings in and to encourage staff engagement in the development of strategy and policy issues;
- Canvassing members of the College to contribute to decision making, either directly (through participation in staff meetings or through election to relevant University authorities and key committees);
- Make all minutes of meetings, external reports etc., Available for viewing by all staff either through intranet, website, moodle or staff emails etc.,.

- College Policies should recognise that freedom of expression is a core value in the College. No policy should be adopted that would, inadvertently or otherwise, curtail freedom of expression among either staff or students. Likewise decisions made by College Officers in the performance of their duties should give due importance of the benefit to the academic community, and society as a whole, that flows from freedom of expression. Staff and students should understand the obligations and responsibilities that freedom of expression brings.
- Notwithstanding the requirement of teaching staff to teach a curriculum arrived at through collegial discussion at discipline or other appropriate level, the College will maintain an environment for teaching and learning that values diversity of opinion, encouraging exchange of opinion between teacher and student as part of a robust educational process. Staff are not required to present as valid what they consider to be inaccurate or untrue, and students will be enabled to question that for which inadequate evidence is given. In all cases, the College will seek to develop the search for truth as a part of the experience of teaching and learning, relying not on the imposition of authority or acceptance of received knowledge but rather on the exercise of the critical faculties of the human mind. Diversity, whether in teaching and learning styles and modalities, subject matter, or learning outcomes, is valued as a natural consequence of academic freedom.

**Revised May 2018**