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Policy Approver: Council

Policy Steward: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Supporting Process: [Guidelines for the Appropriate Exercise of Freedom of Speech](#)

Freedom of Speech Policy (MPF1342)

1. Objective

The objective of this policy is to establish a framework that serves Victorian, Australian and international communities and the public interest by promoting critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate within the University and in the wider society.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the expression of freedom of speech in University activities and/or operations including, but not limited to, online activities and/or operations. This policy applies to students, staff and visitors of the University.

3. Authority

This policy is made under the University of Melbourne Act 2009 and its operation is subject to applicable Commonwealth and Victorian laws, including the Protected Disclosure Act 2012 (Vic). The policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant University policies.

4. Policy

4.1. The University supports the exercise of lawful freedom of speech and recognises that the advancement of knowledge and learning requires:

- (a) university autonomy, academic freedom and freedom of speech as core values of the University;
- (b) an environment in which debate and criticism are a fundamental part of university life; and
- (c) a commitment to orthodoxies being challenged and ideas subject to debate and criticism.

4.2. As set out separately in the [Academic Freedom of Expression Policy](#), the University preserves, defends and promotes academic freedom in the conduct of its affairs, so that all scholars of the University are free to engage in critical enquiry, scholarly endeavour and public discourse without fear or favour.

4.3. The University recognises the right to protest as a manifestation of freedom of speech.

4.4. The University recognises the freedom of:

- (a) staff to participate in professional or representative bodies; and

(b) students to participate in student societies and associations.

4.5. The University expects that in public events and public discourse conducted by or associated with the University, participants will respect the need for reasoned argument, discourse and debate.

4.6. The University does not support the exercise of freedom of speech when the speech:

(a) undermines the capacity of individuals to participate fully in the University;

(b) is unlawful;

(c) prejudices the fulfilment by the University of its duty to foster the safety and wellbeing of staff and students; or

(d) unreasonably disrupts activities or operations of the University.

4.7. The University supports the use of its facilities for events and activities that promote free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate. The University may refuse permission to individuals to speak on University property or at University facilities or may decline to hire facilities for speakers or events where the proposed activities would:

(a) undermine the capacity of students and staff to participate fully in the University;

(b) be unlawful, including the encouragement of law-breaking; or

(c) prejudice the fulfilment by the University of its duty to foster the safety and wellbeing of staff and students; or

(d) involve the advancement of theories or propositions that would not meet scholarly standards to such an extent as to be detrimental to the University's character as an institution of higher learning.

5. Procedural principles

5.1 This policy guides the interpretation and implementation of relevant University policies including, but not limited to:

(a) [Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy \(MPF1328\)](#)

(b) [Student Conduct Policy \(MPF1324\)](#)

(c) [Property Policy \(MPF1115\)](#)

(d) [Provision and Acceptable Use of IT Policy \(MPF1314\)](#)

(e) [Academic Freedom of Expression Policy \(MPF1224\)](#)

6. Definitions

“**academic freedom**” means the same as in the [Academic Freedom of Expression Policy](#) .

“ **associated with the University** ” includes, but is not limited to, University sponsorship, funding, support or branding of an event. An agreement or consent to hire of University property or facilities is not, on its own, sufficient for association.

“**scholars**” include:

- academic staff employed by the university;
- honorary, visiting or adjunct appointees;
- students enrolled in an award, or non-award, course or subject at the University.

“University property” includes but is not limited to University:

- real property forming part of the University;
- precincts;
- campuses;
- buildings or discrete parts of buildings;
- building spaces such as lecture theatres, laboratories, libraries, classrooms and meeting rooms;
- landscape features within the University domain that may be defined by areas, locations, focal points, building forecourts, plazas, courtyards, lawns, gardens, trees, playing fields, walkways, streets, bridges, stairs and terraces.

POLICY APPROVER

Council

POLICY STEWARD

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

REVIEW

This policy is to be reviewed by 19 June 2024.

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved By	Approval Date	Effective Date	Sections Modified
1	Council	19 June 2019	19 June 2019	New policy
2	Council	17 March 2021	26 March 2021	Amended sections 2, 4.1, 4.6, 4.7, 6 Inserted section 4.4 Note section numbers refer to this version.
3	Policy Officer	8 November 2021	8 November 2021	Updated Process documentation.