



# Academic Freedom

## Policy Framework

All policies, guidelines and protocols of Mary Immaculate College (MIC), will reflect the College's commitment to the promotion of academic freedom.

Through this Academic Freedom Policy, MIC hereby adopts the principles of academic freedom as set out in the Royal Irish Academy Statement on the Principles of Academic Freedom (2022) [<https://www.ria.ie/news/policy-and-international-relations/royal-irish-academy-statement-academic-freedom>] for all members of the College Academic Community.

## Policy Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to the members of the College Academic Community in the performance of research, Teaching & learning, and all aspects of academic work within the context of the principles of academic freedom set out in the Royal Irish Academy Statement.

Consistent with the Universities Act (1997), Mary Immaculate College, as a university-level College, embraces the fundamental principles of academic freedom. The Act states the following:

14. — (1) *A university, in performing its functions shall—*

*(a) have the right and responsibility to preserve and promote the traditional principles of academic freedom in the conduct of its internal and external affairs, and*

*(b) be entitled to regulate its affairs in accordance with its independent ethos and traditions and the traditional principles of academic freedom, and in doing so it shall have regard to—*

*(i) the promotion and preservation of equality of opportunity and access,*

*(ii) the effective and efficient use of resources, and*

*(iii) its obligations as to public accountability,*

*and if, in the interpretation of this Act, there is a doubt regarding the meaning of any provision, a construction that would promote that ethos and those traditions and principles shall be preferred to a construction that would not so promote.*

*(2) A member of the academic staff of a university shall have the freedom, within the law, in his or her teaching, research and any other activities either in or outside the university, to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and to state controversial or unpopular opinions and shall not be disadvantaged, or subject to less favourable treatment by the university, for the exercise of that freedom.*

## Roles and Responsibilities

The members of the College Academic Community are required to act in accordance with this Academic Freedom Policy. The College will provide a copy of this policy through the Staff Portal and will endeavour to promote, disseminate and ensure its implementation.

### ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY STATEMENT ON THE PRINCIPLES OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

<https://www.ria.ie/news/policy-and-international-relations/royal-irish-academy-statement-academic-freedom>) **verbatim:**

*The Royal Irish Academy affirms its commitment to academic freedom as an enabling condition intrinsic to the pursuit and advancement of truth, knowledge and understanding.*

*Freedom of movement, of expression and communication, of association and of access to data and information, along with the right to education, are foundation stones for academic freedom. The exercise of these freedoms is fundamentally influenced and informed by the social, political, economic and cultural settings in which academic communities sit and operate.*

*These freedoms are threatened by attacks on the values of systematic academic inquiry and by acts of discrimination, harassment or restriction of movement.*

*The Royal Irish Academy acknowledges that the interplay of these freedoms is 'often complex and*

it may be difficult to disentangle the scientific, political, human rights or socio-economic aspects of specific cases' (International Science Council, 2021).

### **What is academic freedom?**

*Academic freedom expresses the principle that in their pursuit of truth, knowledge and understanding, academic researchers and institutions should be free from inappropriate influences and restrictions of a non-academic nature, such as those deriving from political ideologies and economic interests.*

*Academic freedom is predicated on a civil and respectful intellectual environment, in which due recognition is given to the views and opinions of others, without restricting the spirit of free enquiry and the open discussion of ideas.*

*Academic freedom confers rights, and imposes responsibilities and obligations, upon the academic community and academic institutions in the activities they undertake in and with society. There is a corresponding requirement for the state to respect the autonomy and independence of academic institutions and researchers.*

*Academic freedom protects contributions to research, teaching and learning, and to public participation in dissemination and debate, on condition that such contributions draw upon the individual's areas of academic expertise; are based on rigorous argument, solid research, appropriate data and evidence; are communicated responsibly; and are recognised as such by an epistemic peer community.*

### **Benefits of academic freedom for society**

*The practical expression of academic freedom makes it possible for academic communities to serve the common good of society and to fulfil their core social missions of:*

*pursuing and advancing truth, knowledge and understanding through research, teaching and learning, and discourse;*

*the public communication of knowledge and ideas; and*

*fostering independent thinking and expression across the academy and its political, administrative and financial governance structures.*

**8 November 2022**



Acadamh Ríoga na hÉireann  
Royal Irish Academy

## **Policy Review**

**Review cycle:** This policy will be reviewed on a five-yearly basis or sooner if required. The Vice President Research will initiate the review. Changes of a non-substantial procedural nature may be made on occasion by the College authorities.

Revision	Document History	Reviewed By ET	Approved By UR
0	Initial Release	ET2024#10	UR2025#03
1			
2			